

University of Alberta

Stories from the Margin:
"Insider" Fictions of Immigrant and Ethnic Experience in Canada

by

Tamara P. Seiler



A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of English

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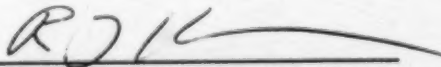
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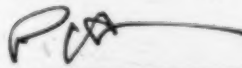
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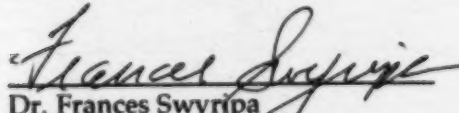
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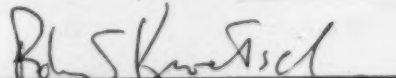
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Abstract

This study addresses the connections between colonial inheritance, social stratification, and fiction, straddling the boundaries of several analytical frameworks and disciplines. It analyzes a number of fictions representing immigrant and/or ethnic experience in Canada by writers speaking from inside that experience. Employing an eclectic analytical framework that draws on the scholarly discourses, in particular, of Canadian ethnic studies and of postcolonial theory, it argues that these "insider" texts can be seen collectively as a site of discursive struggle; that they bear a complex imprint of the social stratification and political conflicts that have shaped ethnic minority experiences in Canada; and that the subordination/marginality often associated with those experiences has been encoded in recurring structural patterns and themes that constitute textual resistance. It also argues that postcolonial theory is a largely compatible addition to earlier approaches to appreciating ethnic experience in Canada, and that combining it with them can allow a reader to better contextualize ethnic minority writing within a very particular national context, but one that resonates with the experiences associated with colonialism and neo-colonialism elsewhere. Chapter One argues that binary patterns are central to fictional representation of immigrant/ethnic experience. Chapter Two highlights important connections among these binary patterns, the generational mapping that is common in the discourses of immigrant and/or ethnic experience, and textual resistance. Chapter Three argues that representations of the ethnic ghetto appear frequently in evocations of ethnic minority experience, and that they constitute a strategy of resistance. Further, the ethnic ghetto is often represented differently by male and female writers, and this difference is

significant, not only for what it may reveal about female immigrant and/or ethnic experience, but also about how a text can function as a multi-layered counter discourse. Chapter Four further explores the representation of inter-ethnic relations as a site of resistance, arguing that the "insider" project is very often one of incisive social criticism. The Conclusion attempts to clarify the analytical framework employed and the implications of the analysis offered, thereby illuminating the fictional texts analyzed as profoundly subversive of hierarchy and univocality.

Dedication

**To the memory of my parents, Wayne and Maude Jeppson and to my
children, Tanya Lynn and Mark Jay Palmer**

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Introduction

My interest in the intersection between immigrant and ethnic experience in Canada and the Canadian literary canon was aroused more than twenty five years ago when, as a recent immigrant to Canada, I became a student of Canadian history and literature. What follows grows out of the work I began then for a Masters thesis I completed in 1972; more than that, however, it attempts to understand more clearly the evolution of the intersection between immigration, ethnicity and literature over the past century during which Canada was transformed from an outpost of the British empire to a heterogeneous postcolonial nation. The question behind my research in the early 1970s was very basic. It stemmed from my growing awareness of the significant impact of immigration and ethnicity on Canadian history and society; and from my growing sense, the more I read of it, that Canadian literature in English had a recognizable voice that "sounded" to my immigrant's ear like the red-brick towns and farms of Ontario looked to my immigrant's eye: that is, Anglo-centric, genteel. As an outsider myself, what I found both striking and puzzling was an inescapable gap between on the one hand, what I was learning (as a student and as a resident of one of Toronto's polyglot neighbourhoods) about Canada's considerable demographic heterogeneity and, on the other hand, about "Canadian literature in English" with its seemingly homogeneous "English-Canadian" voice.

Simply put, the basic question I tried to answer in my first research project grew out of my increasing discomfort with that gap. I wanted to know whether or not there was any Canadian literature in English that explored the experiences of immigrants and their descendants whose backgrounds were neither English nor French. What I discovered then was that indeed

there was such literature, written from both outside and inside the dominant Anglo-Canadian community; however, particularly if it were by a non-Anglo-Canadian writer, it was usually not only absent from the reading lists for the Canadian literature courses I was taking, but, whether out-of-print or just not on library shelves, it was also very often inaccessible.

My sense of this absence combined with two other processes by which I was affected and in which I was involved: first, the assertive Canadian cultural nationalism that shaped many events in the late 1960s and early 1970s in Canada; and second, the emergence of official Multiculturalism in Canada during the same period. Together, these circumstances and processes suggested to me that there were important but complex relationships between social stratification, politics and literature in Canada. I began to understand that these cultural and political dynamics were central to appreciating the texts I was trying, first, to find, and then to appreciate, both on their own terms and in relation to the Canadian literary tradition in English.

Very much has changed since that period, including the degree to which there has been an almost astounding proliferation of literature in Canada by writers working from "inside" a particular ethnic experience, and an impressive growth of relevant literary criticism. Indeed, the textual world encompassed by the designation "Canadian Literature" has expanded remarkably over the past quarter century, becoming much more inclusive of diverse voices (Davey). Equally important (and of course not unrelated), the entire intellectual landscape within which this proliferation has occurred has changed dramatically. Perhaps the most obvious and significant change is that my research topic, once on the outer periphery of literary studies in Canada, is now a foremost concern. In fact one might see my project, which focuses on interrelated issues of race, ethnicity, identity, politics and culture,

as being situated near the very centre of the ideological and theoretical ferment (in Canada and elsewhere) that is currently transforming the academy and perhaps intellectual inquiry more generally. While many of the academic gatekeepers I encountered in English departments in the late 1960s regarded my interest in minority literary voices in Canada as unusual, arcane, if not downright wrongheaded, by the late 1980s, when I proposed to further explore "immigrant and ethnic voices" in a PhD thesis, the response was very different indeed. As Kwame A. Appiah and Henry L. Gates Jr. put it in their introduction to an important special issue in 1992 of the American journal, Critical Inquiry (entitled 'Multiplying Identities'), "(A) literary historian might very well characterize the eighties as the period when race, class, and gender became the holy trinity of literary criticism..." (625). As they and the other contributors to the issue make clear in various ways, no less than a major "shift of paradigms" has occurred.

This shift has been neither simple, nor uncontested. Nor is it complete. As guest editor of a more recent issue (Spring 1997) of Critical Inquiry, "Front Lines, Border Posts," postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha positions his contextualizing remarks in relation to "tensions that haunt the theoretical enterprise" which have emerged from "that decade of difference and diversity--the mid eighties to the mid nineties that we might call, after the manner of historians, the *long* 1990s" (433). Clearly, these issues continue to be at the centre of both academic and larger societal attention, championed by such variously and often loosely aligned knowledge communities as ethnic studies (particularly in Canada), multicultural studies (particularly in the United States), postcolonial studies, women's studies, gay and lesbian studies, subaltern studies, and perhaps most currently popular (and seemingly all-encompassing), cultural studies --all of which have in

various ways challenged the form and content of traditional disciplines, often as part of a larger challenge to economic/social/political inequities (Willet).

Of course the histories of the intellectual movements that have given rise to each of these areas of study over the past approximately thirty years are complex. Certainly conflating them does an injustice to the dense particularity of each; however, it can be said that they share a concern with the relationships between knowledge and power and a desire to challenge dominant political configurations in the interests of a more democratic culture. As the Chicago Cultural Studies Group explains in an earlier issue of Critical Inquiry.

Perhaps because it is so empty as a description, the phrase 'cultural studies' has proven to be a capacious vehicle for utopian thinking...invested with desires that range from the relatively petty--solving the crisis of English departments, for example--to the relatively great, such as linking the cultural criticism of subaltern movements in the West with that of postcolonial and postauthoritarian movements around the world....

'Multiculturalism' has produced if anything an even greater rush for utopian thinking... ." (Chicago Cultural Studies Group, 530-31).

Scholars in the fields of postcolonial theory and criticism have been similarly interested in ameliorative change. They have not only "enlarged" the traditional field of English studies," but also, along with "other relatively recent critical discourses as various as feminism and deconstruction" changed profoundly "the modes of analysis which were dominant within the discipline...from 1945 to 1980" (Moore-Gilbert, 5).

Not surprisingly, the ferment surrounding these broad political/cultural issues--both within and without the academy--has

developed somewhat differently in Canada than in the United States and elsewhere. In Canada the major field of study where issues of ethnicity, race, inter-ethnic relations, multiculturalism--including issues related to minority writing--have been addressed holistically is that of Canadian ethnic studies. Beginning in the late 1960's, as a multi-disciplinary effort on the part of scholars interested in immigrant and ethnic experience in Canada from a variety of disciplinary perspectives, in particular Central and Eastern European languages, literatures and history, as well as sociology, anthropology and Canadian history and literature--ethnic studies has developed a large body of multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary scholarship. Through the Canadian Ethnic Studies Association and its quarterly journal, *Canadian Ethnic Studies* a scholarly community and discourse has developed that has attracted an even greater diversity of scholars over the years as well as community activists and 'front line' people dealing with a variety of 'diversity issues' from multicultural curriculum development to the problems of delivering health care to elderly immigrants (Rasporich, Looking Backward). In addition to looking through the thirty years worth of journal articles on a wide array of topics, one can get a sense of the breadth and depth of this scholarly project from the recent (nearly 600 page) survey volume edited by psychologist J.W. Berry and political scientist, J.A. LaPonce, *Ethnicity and Culture in Canada, The Research Landscape*.¹ As well, Canadian ethnic studies has helped to energize the particular paradigm shift that Canada has

¹ Published in 1994 by U of T press, this book surveys research in both English and French, and in a selected number of areas, including ethnic minority writing. The introduction to the volume provides a useful overview of the development of the field of ethnic studies in Canada and of some of the major issues, including such things as the nature of ethnicity and the relationship between race, ethnicity and culture. In addition to *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, scholars in this area have published in such journals as *Polyphony*, *Prairie Forum*, *Journal of Ukrainian Studies*, as well as in particular disciplinary journals, and have also produced numerous monographs published by a variety of Canadian publishers.

undergone with regard to diversity over the past thirty years, both in terms of public policy and the Canadian studies landscape, since it has provided space for a "third force" critique of dominant discourses--both national and disciplinary.

As Enoch Padolsky makes clear in several articles including his "'Olga in Wonderland' Canadian Ethnic Minority Writing and Post-Colonial Theory" (which appeared in a recent special issue of Canadian Ethnic Studies dedicated to Literary Theory and Ethnic Minority Writing), this body of scholarship is substantial, and deeply grounded in the Canadian situation (18). And, Padolsky argues, the Canadian situation is unique. Probably the foremost reason for this is Canada's history of English-French duality "...which thwarted the attempted formation in the last century of a unitary (American style) pan-Canadian national narrative... and resulted in a number of ideological and institutional consequences" not found elsewhere (Padolsky, *Ethnicity and Race* 132-3). One of these consequences has been the tendency in Canada for the discourse of difference to focus on language and culture (Taylor). Another important and related dimension of the Canadian situation is the role that race has played in Canadian discourses of difference. For several reasons, including demographic ones, this role has been less pronounced in Canada than in the United States, where race, which has tended to be constructed around the black/white binary, has dominated the national discourse of difference. These forces, along with other factors too numerous to discuss in detail here, have combined to produce very particular and complex dynamics with regard to ethnic/racial/cultural difference in Canada. As Will Kymlicka has pointed out in a recent book on Canada's approach to citizenship, "Canada, with its policy of 'multiculturalism within a bilingual framework' and its recognition of Aboriginal rights to self-

government, is one of the few countries which has officially endorsed both polyethnicity and multinationality" (Multicultural Citizenship 22, as quoted in Padolsky, *Ethnicity and Race* 133). This, along with the multi-valent nature of Canada's contemporary discourse on race, ethnicity, and culture, suggests that as a site for negotiating difference, Canadian space is perhaps unique in the degree to which its current structures promote/allow "plural, cross-boundary and intersecting concerns" (Padolsky, *Ethnicity and Race*) 132). In short, then, the "shift of paradigms" mentioned above has taken a very particular course in Canada, both in terms of its political and social manifestations and its discursive expressions..

This is not to say that the scholarly discourse of 'difference' in Canada has been immune to outside influence. "From its inception in the 1960's, Canadian ethnic studies ...had its links to international discussions of the so-called 'ethnic revival' and to international theories of ethnicity that changed and developed over time" (Padolsky, *Olga* 18-9). As well Canadian literature per se as well as Canadian literary criticism has, of course, been influenced by a variety of international currents, including the recent paradigm shift associated with postmodernism, postcolonialism and cultural studies more generally, as can be seen in a variety of 'Canlit' publications, as well as in recent special issues (1996) of the interdisciplinary journals Mosaic and Journal of Canadian Studies.

However, probably due to the nationalist bent of many Canadian studies scholars, this discourse tends to foreground the processes if not the problematics of adapting "foreign" approaches to Canadian material.²

² This is even the case with Linda Hutcheon's rather enthusiastic adaptation of postmodernism to Canadian fiction, *The Canadian Postmodern* in which she emphasizes the importance of situating her reading in Canadian space, and of unpacking the particularly Canadian expressions of a postmodern sensibility (vii-xii). Interestingly, one also sees this impulse in a recent discussion of cultural studies by three Canadian scholars, Valda Blundell, John

However, particularly in the work of Canadian literary scholars whose interests are not primarily in Canadian literature, one sees the influences of the international theoretical discourse--its terminology and its debates--mentioned earlier. This is in part because Anglo-North American literary scholarship in areas that can be broadly construed as falling within the growing purview of cultural studies has drawn on the work of a variety of high profile international scholars connected with what has been called "high theory." They include such well known European structuralists, poststructuralists and discourse analysts as Roland Barthes, Louis Althusser, Antonio Gramsci, Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida as well as "founders" of the British Cultural Studies school such as Raymond Williams, E.P. Thompson and Stuart Hall.³

Internationalization is even more apparent in the area of postcolonial studies. Over the past thirty years, it has brought "...to the forefront the interconnection of issues of race, nation, empire, migration, and ethnicity with cultural production" (Moore-Gilbert, 6). As a field of study, postcolonial criticism is grounded in the work of many of the theorists mentioned above, as well as in that of a number of 'third world' intellectuals, beginning in the 1950s and early 1960s with Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire, D.E.S. Maxwell, Wilson Harris, E.K. Braithwaite, and others. It has emerged much more fully in the late 1970s and beyond through the work of Edward Said, Gayatri Chakravorty

Shepherd and Ian Taylor, *Relocating Cultural Studies, Developments in Theory and Research* (1993), which foregrounds the process of adaptation and evolution of a largely British discourse in North America.

³ Of course the impact of feminist criticism on this massive "shift of paradigms" has been enormous, and is too complex to do justice to here; however, as with 'cultural studies', a number of feminist scholars have had an international impact, perhaps starting with Simone de Beauvoir. Such a list could also include the "french feminists" such as Julia Kristeva and Luce Irigaray as well as such Anglo-American writers/critics as Betty Freidan, Germaine Greer, Elaine Showalter, Susan Brownmiller, Mary Eagleton, and many others.

Spivak, and Homi Bhabha, as well as that of a variety of Australian, Canadian, American and British scholars such as Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Tiffin, Stephen Slemon and Tim Brennan, among a burgeoning number of others.

The combined effect since the revolutionary 1960s of all of this activity--intellectual, social and political--has been transformative not only of social and political relations in a variety of contexts, but also of philosophy, methodology, and pedagogy in a number of academic disciplines, from anthropology to literary studies. The movement from positivism toward more self-reflexive research practices in the social sciences has been paralleled in literary studies by the movement from a modernist emphasis on universality, and on New Critical methodology, toward a poststructuralist emphasis on textual discontinuities, the de centered subject, and the "situatedness" of cultural production and reception. This has, in turn, promoted reading practices that acknowledge the "constructedness" of meaning and clarify the positioning (and thereby the political implications) of particular texts, revealing them as sites of negotiation.

Like the intellectual movements just noted, my continuing study of minority ethnic experience in Canada and its representation in literature originated largely in the intellectual and social developments of the 1960s. As well, I drew heavily at first on liberal humanism and later on various radical critiques, including feminism and neo-Marxism. Overall, I found more of an intellectual home for my interest in ethnic minority writing in the interdisciplinary field of Canadian ethnic studies than in the discipline of Canadian literature.⁴ However, over the past quarter century, the subject of

⁴ This is not to say that I met no resistance among CES scholars to my project; however, that resistance was to literature, not to the range of interrelated issues relevant to my work; and overall I found it much easier to create a space for my topic within the interdisciplinary

my inquiry has changed from marginal to central in the study of Canadian literature. Its parameters have expanded, indeed exploded, and it has demanded constant re-visiting in light of the theoretical transformations discussed above. The latter, taken together, constitute a profound attack on--or at the very least a scathing (and I believe in many ways insightful and justified) interrogation of--the liberal humanism that shaped me as an analyst. Consequently, my present project is a challenging one. Not only must it try to do justice to an enormous proliferation in both primary and secondary sources, but also to address the perspectives offered by the theoretical revolution referred to above, and attempt to bridge the gap between the nationally based discourses of Canadian studies/ Canadian ethnic studies in which my work is to some considerable degree grounded, and the international discourse of postcolonialism. (This latter effort is, I believe, an important and potentially fruitful one, to which I will return later). Moreover, it must do this within a complex and shifting intellectual terrain.

As the Chicago Cultural Studies group suggests in their discussion of cultural and 'multicultural' studies, students of diversity are in the midst of

... a still developing crisis in the relation between academic knowledge and cultural politics. The terms of this crisis--*culture, politics, identity*--are both contested and ambiguous. The conditions we describe here are also changing rapidly enough to outstrip our own attempt to encapsulate them (552).

Focusing primarily on the United States, though also drawing on the international discourse that undergirds cultural studies generally, The Group also emphasizes the contested nature of the cultural studies project, noting

discourse of CES than to adapt the discourses of difference to Canadian literary studies--at least until the mid 1980s. Early in my M.A. work, I was 'placed' briefly within the framework of Commonwealth literature studies, but my particular interest in Canadian *national* issues, as well as my discomfort with what I regarded as a colonial framework made that intellectual space seem inappropriate for my work.

that there is little analytical or strategic consensus either within or among the various fields that comprise it, nor between its proponents and those outside the academy who--for a variety of reasons-- take an interest in the issues of cultural politics it raises/ confronts: "Given the different registers of these [various] desires, it is easy to see why they are often in conflict, or at best remain unclarified and unreconciled" (531). As well, these inter-related projects, while enjoying a somewhat glib popularity are nevertheless racked by internal controversy and often subject to attack from without--from both "conservative" and "radical" quarters. Even supporters suggest they are in danger of generating a solipsistic and "cliché-ridden" discourse that may prevent their achieving worthwhile goals (Appiah and Gates, 625).

A similar heterogeneity in both theory and practice characterizes the closely related field of postcolonial studies. In his recent overview volume, *Postcolonial Theory: Contexts, Practices, Politics* (1997), Bart Moore-Gilbert points out that postcolonial critics clearly share some fundamental assumptions. Drawing on the work of Edward Said (especially his groundbreaking *Orientalism* (1978) as well as his more recent *Culture and Imperialism*(1993),

...postcolonial criticism has challenged hitherto dominant notions of the autonomy of the aesthetic sphere, helping to gain acceptance for the argument, advanced on a number of fronts since the 1960s especially, that 'culture' mediates relations of power as effectively, albeit in more indirect and subtle ways, as more public and visible forms of oppression. ...postcolonial critics have characteristically worked to break down the formerly fixed boundaries between text and context in order to show the continuities between patterns of representation, of subject peoples and the material practices of (neo)colonial power (8).

However, he also notes that "(P)ostcolonial criticism and theory alike comprise a variety of practices performed within a range of disciplinary fields in a multitude of different institutional locations around the globe" (5). As

well, he points to criticism from without, even lack of recognition as a genuine field of study, as well as heated controversy from within, primarily around the "...political implications of the incorporation of French derived 'high' theory in postcolonial analysis" (13, 152-84). Controversy rages as well over such issues as the nature of the relationship between postmodernism and postcolonialism, and the proper domain of postcolonial practice (Mukherjee, Whose; Slemon, *Unsettling*).

Despite the obvious problems presented by the complex theoretical terrain of cultural studies and in particular of postcolonial studies, I will argue that if carefully situated within the Canadian context, including the "pre-existing discourse on ethnicity called 'Canadian ethnic studies'" (Padolsky, Olga 18), the latter offers a powerful and illuminating lens through which to view ethnic minority writing in Canada. This is not because it offers a final answer to what is, after all, not a totally new conundrum: "the liberal's dilemma" of being caught on the horns of their championing of an ethic of world "brotherhood" based on universalistic notions of human nature on the one hand, and of a valorization of difference that moves beyond the barriers of ethnocentrism and essentialism on the other.⁵ Rather, it does so because the theoretical work it draws on--that of Foucault, Derrida, Said, Spivak, Bhabha, and others, as well as the heated debates this work has generated--illuminates more clearly than did either the old humanism or the old Marxism the complex nature of the relationship between culture and

⁵ This dilemma continues to be a central one in postcolonial discourse. An illuminating reference to it that highlights both its continuing centrality and its future shape occurs in Bhabha's introduction to "Front Lines/Border Posts" where, in an effort to characterize the emerging interaction (within the framework of postnational migration) between minorities and majorities, Bhabha quotes Arjun Appadurai: "...the central feature of global culture today is the politics of the mutual effort of sameness and difference to cannibalize one another and thus proclaim their successful hijacking of the twin Enlightenment ideas of the triumphantly universal and the resiliently particular..." (436).

political/social/economic power, and in particular the relationship between text and context, between discourse and power. As well, cultural studies builds in particular on Derrida's notions of the de centered subject. It thus illuminates the complex and ongoing dynamics of identity construction in ways that are congruent with the insights into the multi-faceted nature of identity that have emerged from a plethora of social scientific literature on the subject. Postcolonial analysis both draws on and interrogates these theoretical discourses by insisting on foregrounding the relationships between culture and historical imperialism, as well as its continuing discursive legacy.

The theoretical revolution represented in these latter discourses is not, it seems to me, an insurmountable challenge to my project and to my ideological position as researcher/reader. On the contrary, these discourses provide many of the heuristic tools (including theoretical support for the interdisciplinary perspective that I attempt to bring to my topic) that I was largely missing in Canadian literary studies when I began the first stages of my study in the late 1960s. They also carry with them many of the ideas and debates that have influenced my own intellectual concerns over the past thirty years. The theoretical/critical discussion they have at last generated in literary circles addresses at a fundamental level the questions at the heart of my research: What constitutes difference? How is it constructed? What role, if any, does discourse play in that construction? What is the nature of the relationship between discourse and social stratification? Combined with Canadian ethnic studies scholarship, these discourses enable an exploration of particularly Canadian questions about the relationships among different modes of discourse (e.g., restrictive immigration laws, anti-immigrant editorials, royal commission reports, historical accounts, fictional texts). How

have Canada's historical origins as an outpost of two empires (in particular the "victorious" British empire) been inscribed? What processes have enabled non-British immigrants and their progeny to find/make a place for themselves in "English Canada"? What processes have effected a continuing redefinition of Canada and of Canadians? What roles, if any, has fiction played in these processes? How can one enable through one's own discursive practice more just and respectful interaction among diverse peoples?

Of course the perspectives offered by the cultural discourses mentioned above do not provide definitive answers to these questions, or others closely related to them. Indeed, they often (quite rightly) problematize such questioning, highlighting a number of deep and persistent problems: what is the relationship between literature and social organization? how can analysts' extricate themselves from the discursive structures in which they participate to perceive or represent the 'Other', inevitably a construction of those discourses? How can one represent a collectivity without essentializing it? How can analysis do justice to the instability, the shifting and negotiated nature, of identity? These and other related questions about the analyst's positioning vis a vis the subjects of her inquiry, her complicity in continuing (neo) colonization, comprise a persistent interrogation of research projects such as mine that attempt to highlight and clarify relationships between diversity, culture, power, and fictional texts.⁶ While such questions are illuminating, even crucial, to self reflexive, responsible analysis, they have not elicited a wide consensus as to their answers. Nor has a more pragmatic battery of questions about the proper sphere for postcolonial analysis, about

⁶ See for example, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *THE POST-COLONIAL CRITIC. Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues* Ed. Sarah Harasym. New York, London: Routledge, 1990, in particular Chapter 4, "The Problem of Cultural Self-representation" and Chapter 6, "The Post-colonial Critic".

which analytical territories are most suited for viewing with the postcolonial lens, elicited uncontested answers. What does seem clear to me, however, is the appropriateness of my drawing on postcolonial practice in my project here, not only because it highlights the facts and processes of historical imperialism, but also because the imperial metaphor is a powerful heuristic tool for evoking and clarifying a variety of unequal relationships.

This does not mean I am unaware of the dangers of a "traveling theory" (Said) that might well force local particulars into an ill-fitting generic suit, (or shirt, as Joseph Pivato suggests in "Shirt of the Happy Man: Theory and Politics of Ethnic Minority Writing"), or of the potential for oversimplification in the center-margin taxonomy. Like Pivato, who, along with "(E)thnic minority writers (who) have become aware of the disparity between ...the promise of the new theory" and the realities of "silencing and totalizing new master narratives" (31) admits a certain skepticism about the value of theories from afar, Enoch Padolsky points forcefully to the first danger. He questions the applicability of postcolonial "language and political analysis" to "Canadian reality" since "most post-colonial theoretical discussion takes place in non-Canadian theorized space" (17). Pointing out the vagueness and inappropriateness of the terminology in *The Empire Writes Back*, as illustrated, for example in "(T)he use of the Australian term 'migrant' to refer to Canadian ethnic and racial minorities (the term 'ethnicity' does not even appear in the Index)" (17), Padolsky also criticizes the general absence of discussion among postcolonial critics of ethnic minority writing in Canada. Most particularly, he highlights their complete failure to engage in the substantial "pre-existing discourse" in Canada. Critiquing as inadequate the postcolonial analysis of Kristjana Gunnars *The Prowler* and Mordecai Richler's *Solomon Gursky was Here* offered by Diana Brydon in

Inuit Speaks: Contamination as Literary Strategy, Padolsky challenges postcolonial approaches that are not well grounded in Canadian contexts:

The fact that post-colonial criticism draws its theoretical concepts from elsewhere and does not adequately engage non-mainstream Canadian reality would thus seem to present a fundamental problem in claiming relevance to the contexts of Canadian 'pluri-ethnicity.' At the very least, such relevance could not be assumed and would need to be proved. Yet the only question that seems to arise in post-colonial discussions of Canadian materials is how to 'fit' Canada into this pre-existing post-colonial theoretical framework. What is missing is any sense of the reverse process. ...

When post-colonial theory turns to Canadian ethnicity, therefore, and the discussion moves (for example in Brydon) to Canadian ethnic minority writing and 'metaphorical creolization,' 'hybridity,' 'syncreticity,' 'settlers' and 'natives' and a host of other imported terms, it seems to me incumbent, both theoretically and practically, to point out that there is already in Canada a whole pre-existing discourse on ethnicity called 'Canadian ethnic studies'(18):

I agree with Padolsky that "(T)he existence of this considerable discourse on Canadian ethnicity and race and its absence from post-colonial discussions of Canadian 'pluri-ethnicity' should certainly...give pause to any facile acceptance of post-colonial claims on Canadian ethnic realities"(19); but I also share his hopefulness about the potential benefits of postcolonial theorists "field test(ing) their theories in the light of Canadian experience" and of "Canadian ethnic studies being forced to re-examine its current theoretical underpinnings...in the light of the international and comparative context...that post-colonialism brings with it" (27). Consequently, I attempt in the following chapters to bring these two discourses together. I do this in the interest of illuminating some of the fundamental features of Canadian ethnic minority fiction and their political significance. However, I do so

mindful as well of another very telling critique of the dangers inherent in a postcolonial framework.

In an eloquent analysis of the limitations and dangers of postcolonial criticism, Arun Mukherjee (who writes in Canada about South Asian literature, including diasporic texts) points to a very important potential problem when she notes that "(I)n this binary framework, the only difference the post-colonialist critics ...grant is our difference from the so-called 'centre' " thus defining the 'Other' as eternally peripheral, significant only in relation to the centre's concerns (Whose 5). Agreeing with Mukherjee that the dangers of oversimplification in postcolonial analysis are very real, I would nevertheless argue that carefully applied, the centre-margin metaphor is useful not only for its power to highlight the cultural implications of hegemony, but also to interrogate and ultimately to alter the discursive patterns that work to sustain it. This may be particularly true if one allows the metaphor to work in such a way that it highlights the complexities at the boundaries, the points of intersection between centres and peripheries. As Stephen Slemon argues in "Unsettling the Empire: Resistance Theory for the Second World," white settler-colonial writing from places like Canada occupies this borderland, a "neither/ nor territory," and "reclaiming" it for "postcolonial pedagogy and research" is vitally important to the postcolonial project, and perhaps, I would add, to the Canadian studies project as well.

Drawing on Alan Lawson's term, "Second World" to refer to white settler colonial writing, Slemon suggests that

...in order to avoid essentialism and to escape theoretical absolutism, we might profitably think of the category of the settler cultures of Australia, Canada, southern Africa, and New Zealand as inhabiting a 'Second World' of discursive polemics--of inhabiting, that is, the space of dynamic relation between those...binaries which colonialism 'settles' upon a landscape:

And further, that the "Second World" can be understood, "like 'post-colonial criticism' itself" as "at root a *reading* position, a reading and writing action..." connected with the notion of "intermediary knowledge" (38). This notion of a reading and writing practice that valorizes "intermediary knowledge" seems particularly important, and useful for describing the methodology I attempt to employ. Since each of the major discourses I draw on--Canadian ethnic studies and postcolonial studies--emerged out of a sense of the need to interrogate dominant discourses, to point out the inadequacies and inequities inherent in prevailing knowledge formations, they tend to construct knowledge as intermediary, and to emphasize the need to balance macro and micro perspectives, to highlight the positioning of the researcher. Thus each tends to promote a reading and writing practice that foregrounds the need for contextualization and problematizes certainty. However, because of the differences between them--in disciplinary origins, in focus, in terminology--juxtaposing them highlights the "intermediary" nature of the "knowledge" offered by each, and promotes a reading practice that insists on sensitivity to multiple contexts, to positioning and to the need for a variety of methods and viewpoints in the project of attending to ethnic minority voices in Canada.

In writing from within this "Second World," both in terms of my focus, which includes Canadian "white settler" texts--albeit written by non-British settlers--and in terms of the "reading practice" I attempt to employ, I hope to avoid some of the pitfalls Mukherjee alludes to as well as to unpack to some degree the complex, intertwined, and ambivalent layers in that "*second world* of post-colonial literary resistance"(40).

Clearly, a number of postcolonial critics have recognized the particular relevance of postcolonial approaches to the Canadian case, even if they haven't been as aware as one might wish of "pre-existing" Canadian discourses. As Bart Moore-Gilbert notes,

The Example of Canada serves to suggest just how tangled and multifaceted the term 'postcolonial' has now become in terms of its temporal, spatial, political and socio-cultural meanings. Here there are at least five distinct but often overlapping contexts to which the term might be applied. First of all,...until the 1960s at least, white Canada saw itself to a large degree as in a dependent relationship, culturally and politically, to Britain; and the legacy of this relationship continues to have important repercussions for Canada's identity today. (As well)...many Canadians now see themselves as having fallen under the economic and political sway of the United States. ...Thirdly, there is the issue of Quebec, which has often been seen in recent times as an oppressed culture, or, indeed, a nation within Canada. However,... a state like Quebec, (or indeed, Canada as a whole) which seems to be postcolonial from one perspective can be simultaneously (neo) colonial in its relationship to other groups within its jurisdiction. (such as)...the 'First Nations' of Canada. ...the increasingly voluminous and self assertive nature of the cultural production of these groups is fully amenable to analysis within postcolonial frameworks. A final context is provided by the arrival of significant numbers of 'New Commonwealth' migrants to Canada, whose relocation has taken place since the formal decolonization of Britain's former empire and the relaxation of the 'white Canada' policy which governed immigration strategies until the 1960s. ...As writers from Austin Clarke in the 1960s to Bharati Mukherjee in the 1980s suggest, Canada's treatment of such minorities raises many questions about its claims to be a genuinely pluralistic or 'multi-cultural' society (Moore-Gilbert, 10-11).

Thus, as Moore-Gilbert argues, despite criticism of the postcolonial approach for its arguably coherence-destroying tendency to produce an overwhelming "multiplication of margins," this "multiplication" can be viewed as a positive sign: an indication of the empowerment of a variety of people whose "coming to voice" testifies to the complexity of the imperial legacy in places

such as Canada, where the "intertwined histories of colonization" have produced "many different degrees, forms and histories of post-coloniality..." (12)

In the chapters that follow, then, I take as a point of departure for applying postcolonial theory to my subject Padolsky's hope that a careful grounding in the Canadian landscape might make it a more genuinely useful critical practice for illuminating Canadian reality than it is at present. To this end I draw on the pioneering work of such Canadian analysts as John Porter, Jean Burnet, Howard Palmer, Wsevolod Isajiw, Raymond Breton, John Berry, Enoch Padolsky, Joseph Pivato, Peter Li and many others. I also take as a point of departure Moore-Gilbert's enabling assertion that while differences among the subjects of postcolonial analysis "must always be respected," to argue that certain groups--such as internal minorities in Canada--are not appropriate subjects for postcolonial analysis is tantamount to insisting that appropriate subjects be chosen on the basis of "...a kind of beauty parade in which the competitors are made to press their claims to have been the most oppressed colonial subjects or to be the most 'truly' postcolonial subjects"; and further, that such an insistence misses the important point that this "multiplication of margins" points to "the increasing success of the manifold struggles against neo-colonialism, which itself, of course, takes many forms" (12).

As well, I draw on the work of such pioneering researchers as D.E.S. Maxwell, who, in the 1960s, pointed to a variety of postcolonial positions (Ashroft, et.al. 25), including that of internal minority, and of Michel Hechter, who in 1975 analyzed internal colonization in Great Britain, highlighting the "continuing, essentially (neo) colonial, ...subordination of the 'peripheral' nations of Scotland, Wales, and Ireland by the English

'centre' (Moore-Gilbert, 15). I draw too on critiques of a variety of analysts for their over-simplified models of both colonizer and colonized. For example, Bart Moore-Gilbert comments on the over-simplifying tendencies of Bhabha's (psychoanalytic) schematizing of these positions and calls for analysis that would "take greater account of how the colonizer's identity was negotiated...partly in terms of a displacement of intra-metropolitan forms of Othering"(149).⁷

In focusing in part on the relationship between "English" Canadians and "other" European immigrant and/or ethnic groups, my project highlights just such "intra-metropolitan forms of Othering", or prejudice and discrimination, and argues for the particular usefulness of postcolonial analysis for helping to clarify--particularly in relation to literature--the various interrelated processes (social/political/cultural) whereby European ethnic minorities have been subordinated in Canada as well as those whereby such groups have "come to voice." The material and discursive experiences of these groups must be understood within the context of the historical connection in Canada (from Confederation to approximately the Second World War) between the hegemonic valorization of Canada's British imperial connections and the closely related recourse to an ideology of Anglo-conformity to defend various kinds of discrimination against central, southern and eastern Europeans in Canada (Palmer, *Patterns*; Avery; Troper). My project focuses as well on "'New Commonwealth' migrants to Canada--formerly colonized people from various parts of the former British empire,

⁷ The literary illustration Moore-Gilbert provides is interesting in relation to my project. He points out that in *Heart of Darkness* "...Marlow defines himself, and legitimizes the 'English' civilizing mission specifically, against European Others quite as much as in the context of the 'cannibals'...crucial as these are to the construction of his role as a representative of an advanced civilization" (149).

who have occupied yet another position in Canada's complex cultural hierarchy--generally that of "visible minority."⁸

As I have explained, though I regard postcolonial perspectives as useful, I do not rely exclusively on postcolonial theorists/critics for my critical framework. Rather, I draw on a number of other kinds of sources--especially the interrelated discourses of Canadian ethnic studies and Canadian studies--for at least three reasons. First, I believe a judicious eclecticism enhances my appreciation of the particularity of the texts I analyze and of the contexts from which they emerge. Focused as it is on what Eli Mandel called "the ethnic voice," on what Enoch Padolsky has called "ethnic minority writing" (Canadian minority writing) or on what in postcolonial terms might be called a "counter discourse" (Moore-Gilbert, 75), my project demands a careful grounding in the historical Canadian context, as Padolsky has pointed out so clearly. As well, however, I take my cue from postcolonial theorists and critics who point to the tension between "mainstream" postmodern theory and the postcolonial critical concern not to obliterate the material circumstances and the agency of the historical colonized subject. Thus I assume the kind of "authorial intention" that Slemon and Tiffin note in their introduction to *After Europe* as the characteristic assumption of the contributors to that volume:

Generally, this recuperation of intentionality in the production of textual meaning is not, in these essays, narrowly located in the name of the 'author'. Rather, it is fastened to an anterior, though not determining, cultural dimension to writing: a

⁸ Augie Fleras and Jean Elliott, *Unequal Relations, An Introduction to Race, Ethnic and Aboriginal Dynamics in Canada* (2nd ed), 1996, discuss visible minorities as a category of "multicultural minorities" in Canada, the other being "European, or 'white' ethnics." Visible minority is "an official government category of native and foreign-born, non-white, non-Caucasoid individuals, including: blacks, Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, Filipinos, Indo-Pakistanis, West Asians and Arabs, Southeast Asians, Latin Americans, and Pacific Islanders" (279).

ground--as Mark Williams and Alan Riach explain--of post-colonial representation in an on-going cultural refiguration of 'the various inheritances, traditions, cultural memories...which make up the post-colonised world' (xviii-ix).

Thus, in attempting to do justice to this kind of nuanced 'intention,' grounded in particular Canadian contexts, I draw on the work of a variety of Canadian scholars, some of which clearly predates the latest phases of the 'cultural studies revolution.'⁹

Second, an eclectic analytical approach enables me to view both my project and the texts I analyze from multiple perspectives, and thus to employ a reading practice that highlights the constructedness and intermediacy of knowledge; and third, it enables me to make connections between different kinds of scholarly discourses in the interest of a more holistic view of the topic I explore. My aim is to achieve a judicious balance between a micro and macro approach, one that foregrounds particular features of the Canadian situation, while at the same time placing it within a larger postcolonial context, with a view to revealing important aspects of the complex relationship in Canada between literary texts, ethno-cultural diversity and various kinds of political/social power.

In adopting this multi-layered approach, I also aim for congruency with Spivak's admonition that the postcolonial critic should employ "...an analytic framework which is open--even contradictory--rather than totalizing," one that strives for "...a persistent recognition of heterogeneity," and one that recognizes that the "critic must proceed in the absence of a totalizable analytic foothold" (Moore-Gilbert, 98, 75, 79). As well, I do so in sympathy with Said's call in "Freedom from Domination in the Future," the

⁹ See Moore-Gilbert for two particularly useful discussions of the long evolution of postcolonial ideas: the first highlights the evolution of Commonwealth Literature studies (27-29); the second the long engagement by a variety of intellectuals with a "proto" postcolonial interrogation of western discourses, e.g. 172-179).

final chapter of his *Culture and Imperialism*, for a new kind of humanism suited to increasingly global interaction: cognizant of the power of discourse in constructing our perceptions and relations, based in an acknowledgment that "no one today is purely *one* thing" and committed to thinking "concretely and sympathetically, contrapuntally about others"(336). As Moore-Gilbert explains,

Said...has had persistent recourse, even in certain passages of *Orientalism* to a pluralistic vision of social identity which is derived, in the first instance, from the Western liberal model of the 'family of Man' as a way forward beyond the 'politics of blame'. However, *Culture and Imperialism* makes clear that there can be no return to the false universalism and pluralism of the old tradition of Western academic liberalism. Counterpoint is not only linked to a politics of liberation which is antagonistic to the current geo-political settlement represented by 'the New World Order', but it also seeks to recognize and accept cultural difference, not abolish it or sublate it under the over-arching sign of the white Western middle-class male. In a telling image...Said suggests that 'contrapuntal analysis should be modeled not (as earlier notions of comparative literature were) on a symphony but rather on an atonal ensemble (192-3).

Nor for one grounded in a study of Canada, and in particular of ethnic minority experience in Canada, is it impossible to think of Canada, with its evolving, highly contested, multi-valenced discourse of nation, as a space that is particularly well suited for nurturing articulations of such a paradoxical blending of unity/diversity, discourses of nation that aspire to something very like Said's "atonal ensemble."

Clearly, however, the complex analytical challenge presented by this "contrapuntal" ideal (as the basis for a reading practice) is even more formidable than the challenge, as I saw it in the late 1960s, of "unhiding the hidden" immigrant and ethnic voices; and both my research framework and the primary question underlying my work here is considerably more complex than they were in 1972. Simply formulated, the inter-related questions at the

centre of my project are how fiction about immigrant and/or ethnic minority experience in Canada by writers speaking from inside that experience--'works'; that is, how it encodes ethnic hierarchy, and how it can best be understood and appreciated as a discursive mode without minimizing the differences among particular texts and contexts. Clearly, achieving this goal requires a reading practice congruent with that called for by Slemon and Tiffin in their introduction to *After Europe*, despite the "astonishingly difficult" problem such a practice poses. Or as they phrase the question, "...how can our reading of post-colonial literary texts--in their cultural specificity and in their post-European commonality--issue productively into a genuinely post-colonial literary criticism?" (ix).

Of course I do not have "the" answer to this important question; however, my attempt at such a practice is rooted in the eclecticism described above, which involves careful contextualization of particular texts, as well as close reading for "resistance" to dominant discourse. Drawing on an article on "Figures of Colonial Resistance" by Jenny Sharpe, Slemon explains that resistance in writing is not merely transparent, that it

...must go beyond the mere 'questioning' of colonialist authority....that you can never *easily* locate the sites of anti-colonial resistance--since resistance itself is always in some measure an 'effect of the contradictory representation of colonial authority'...never simply a 'reversal' of power--and...that resistance itself is therefore never *purely* resistance, never *simply* there in the text or the interpretive community, but...*necessarily* complicit in the apparatus it seeks to transgress... (and) that a *theory* of literary resistance *must* recognize the inescapable partiality, the incompleteness, the untranscendable *ambiguity* of literary or indeed *any* contra/dictory or contestatory act... which predicates a semiotics of *refusal* on a gestural mechanism whose first act must always be an acknowledgment and a *recognition* of the reach of colonialist power (Unsettling 36-7).

Agreeing with Slemon that the nature of resistance in a literary text is complex, but that it is "necessarily in a place of ambivalence: between systems, between discursive worlds, implicit and complicit in both of them"(37), my reading focuses in particular on the borderland interaction represented in the fictional texts: those points of tension between "us" and "them" where difference is enacted and the complexities of ambivalent, shifting and evolving identification are inscribed (Bart).

Models of this kind of 'reading for resistance' across a broad range of texts are not numerous. I find an 'early' Canadian example in Dick Harrison's *Unnamed Country, The Struggle for a Canadian Prairie Fiction* (1977), which delineates a regional voice of resistance, and a more recent (and perhaps more directly related) one in Sylvia Soderlind's *Margin/Alias Language and Colonization in Canadian and Québécois Fiction* (1991). Soderlind saw her project in the following way:

In simple terms, the aim of the following is to establish whether and, if possible, how, the linguistic effects of alterity can be measured in literary texts, alterity being understood at this point in a broad sense as an inherent aspect of marginality and a central concept in the discourse of colonization (8).

While Soderlind, who implies the notion of *resistance* in the phrase "the impact of alterity" focuses on the linguistic features of texts, I focus on the impact of 'alterity' on their narrative features and their thematic content.¹⁰

¹⁰ My partial use of what might be called "thematics" or a "thematic approach" and in particular my interest here in the relationship between narrative features and thematic content, is not a throwback to an earlier and in many ways outmoded and inadequate methodology; rather, it is informed by two very contemporary approaches to the study of literary texts, as discussed, for example, by a variety of writers in Werner Sollors, ed., *The Return of Thematic Criticism*, and as exemplified in the cultural studies approach taken by Sarah Corse in *NATIONALISM AND LITERATURE, The Politics of culture in Canada and the United States*. Corse, working from a social constructionist framework, analyzes the narrative elements, themes and stylistic features of a number of texts to illustrate the ways in which national literatures are constructed and how that process in turn both reflects and shapes the construction of nation, of national identity. Such a renewed thematic approach also seems to be called for by postcolonial concerns about doing justice to the agency of the "colonized" subject

Like Sander L. Gilman (1993), I am interested in exploring themes and images largely from a poststructuralist perspective that is compatible with the reading practice I have just described. Gilman's summary of the evolution of thematic criticism neatly captures my sense of its usefulness to my project:

Those older works which sought to study the formal themes of literature—either in terms of their archetypal patterns...or their literary traditions...always sought to relate these themes to some type of social or cultural reality. Most often that reality... was the specter of the autonomous work of art functioning independently of any historical or cultural context....

In the past twenty years, the study of themes has become the study of the group (and individual) fantasies of a culture.... which reflect our contemporary interest in questions shaped by class, national, racial, and gender identity. As a result the intent of the critic has also shifted.

The critic no longer seeks after the 'kernel of truth' in the image but rather uses the image as a means of portraying the ever-shifting and often contradictory self-image of those whose fantasies are bound up with their use of images. The parallel study, that of the internalization of these images within the world view of those represented, has become a substantial addition to this literature through the work of feminist scholars and those...dealing with the image of racial difference. The study of images, in its best and most coherent form today, is linked to the examination of the group and individual fantasies; both the fantasies of the group generating the images as well as those internalizing these images. (295-96).

My reading is informed by a (renewed) thematic criticism as outlined by Professor Gilman, which clearly draws on constructionist discourses for a view of the relationships between literary texts and larger social structures. I

and to the material world outside the "text"(Moore-Gilbert, 136-40). Clearly, I want to avoid the problem connected with much poststructuralist literary criticism which, in abandoning "...a reflective or mimetic purchase to literary writing" tends obliterate the "lived experience" that postcolonial literature may strive to represent, to disregard "...a dimension in writing ...which surfaces in *thematic* contestation, in a socially *practised* linguistic rupture, and ...in the *expressive* representation of other codes of apprehending 'reality', other structures for disclosing resistance" (Slemon and Tiffin, xv).

focus on a fairly wide selection of novels and short stories written in English, though my analysis is also peripherally informed by my reading of fictions that have been translated into English and of poetry, plays and autobiography. My choice of texts has also been informed and limited by political and sociological considerations.

Political and cultural discourse in Canada can clearly be seen as a long-standing "site of struggle" evolving out of the country's dual colonial inheritance (Porter; Royal Commission Book IV; Palmer Immigration; Fleras and Elliott; Whitaker; Avery; Verhoeven). This discourse of "biculturalism" essentially marginalized those who did not fit into its English/French framework. This includes Aboriginal peoples and non-British and non-French immigrants--those who were ultimately designated "allophones" in Quebec and "the other ethnic groups" in English-speaking Canada).¹¹ Adopting this terminology because it carries the specific history of ethnic positioning in Canada and points to the continuing negotiations surrounding ethnicity in the Canadian context, my study focuses on fiction produced by writers from these "other" ethno-cultural backgrounds: a literature that has, over the years been designated as occupying a particular

¹¹ The term "other ethnic groups" became part of official political discourse with the publication of Book IV of the Report of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism: The Cultural Contribution of the Other Ethnic Groups in 1967, whose recommendations became the basis for the Multicultural policy adopted in 1971. The principle author of that report, Jean Burnet, acknowledges both the strengths and weaknesses of the term in her book, "Coming Canadians." An Introduction to the History of Canada's Peoples (1989) as well as its continuing usefulness: "There is no satisfactory designation for the Canadians who will be the focus of this study. ...Hence, the term employed in the terms of reference of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism--'other ethnic groups'--will be used, although with some regret since it relegates those to whom it refers to a residual category and minimizes both the differences among them and their significance for Canadian society. It has the advantage, of course, of implying that the French and British are also ethnic groups, a fact sometimes denied when the term ethnic is given a pejorative meaning" (4). As mentioned earlier, Augie and Fleras in a more recent discussion have adopted the term "multicultural minorities" (278) to refer to this "other" group of non-British, non-French, non-Aboriginal people.

position, either somewhat outside or, more recently, a "special case" within Canadian literature, through such terms as ethnic literature, ethnic minority literature, "literature of lesser diffusion"¹² and more recently, multicultural literature (Hutcheon and Richmond; Kambourelli) continue to be used to suggest distinct positioning.

While limiting the texts I analyze in detail to those produced by writers from "other" ethnic backgrounds (as delineated in Book IV of the "Bi and Bi" Commission's Report), I have included within that category what I call "immigrant and/or ethnic writers." Enoch Padolsky has usefully included both of these types of writers within his term, "ethnic minority writers."¹³ For the purposes of this study, the important distinction between these two terms is the obvious one. That is, while immigrant refers to those (relatively) recently arrived people with foreign origins, "ethnic," the broader term, includes immigrants as well as succeeding generations of people of a common "other" origin who share a sense of "peoplehood" and/or who are regarded as so doing by others (see below). Thus, various Anglo-Celtic peoples could, of course, be classified in sociological terms as "ethnic groups," and as "immigrants," but my study takes its cue from the legacy of colonial discursive practice in Canada which (with the notable exception of the Irish) constructed only "non-founding" peoples as immigrants and "ethnics" in the problematic (Othering) senses of those terms. Not wanting to limit my discussion to "immigrant" fictions (either those produced by immigrants or focusing simply on immigrant experience, the journey and adaptation, say), I

¹² This was the title of a conference organized under the auspices of the University of Alberta's Comparative Literature department and held in Edmonton in April 1988. A volume of articles developed from this conference and was published as an issue of *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature* in 1989.

¹³ Padolsky has developed this terminology in several articles. See, for example, "Cultural diversity and Canadian literature: A pluralistic approach to majority and minority writing in Canada," *International Journal of Canadian Studies*, 3:111-28, 1991.

have adopted Padolsky's term, "ethnic minority writing," though I occasionally use the term "immigrant and/or ethnic" to emphasize the complexity of the category, which includes writing produced by second and subsequent generation descendants of "non-founding" immigrants who have, because of Canada's historical colonial relationship to Britain, continued to be constructed as 'other' by virtue of not being "English." So, while many of the texts I analyze represent the actual experience of immigrating, many do not; rather, they focus on the experiences of subsequent generations.

Thus situated, at the complex social/cultural/political site where immigration, ethnicity, nation building and imaginative literature intersect, my study asks whether writers who depict immigrant and/or ethnic experience in Canada from "inside" that experience have created a body of work that resists the discursive structures implicit in Canada's colonial history: a "counter discourse" in postcolonial terms. I argue that the answer to this question is yes, and that this resistance is enunciated primarily through recurring structural and thematic patterns that encode ambivalence.

Acknowledging, then, both the complexity and the social constructedness of ethnic identification, and its continuous negotiation, I assume a widely accepted sociological definition of ethnicity, one which is sufficiently flexible to accommodate a post structural notion of identity. Thus, part of the analytical value of this particular definition is that it implies the constructed and evolving nature of ethnicity and incorporates both ascriptive and self-descriptive criteria, as follows:

Ethnicity is a principle by which people are defined, differentiated, organized, and rewarded on the basis of commonly shared physical or cultural characteristics. Ethnicity can consist of a consciously shared system of

beliefs, values, loyalties, and practices of relevance to group members who regard themselves as different and apart. The salient feature of ethnicity lies in its self-definition and self-identification as a distinct and unique people (peoplehood). Other characteristics and traits that symbolize and reinforce this shared system—including religion, language, and homeland—can vary in importance or strength depending on the nature of the situation (Fleras & Elliott, 433).

Accordingly, the primary focus of my analysis is fiction by writers who clearly identify the main characters they depict as "ethnic" in the terms outlined above, and who identify themselves as being, or as having been, part of the same collectivity. This definition does not in any way imply that ethnicity is "primordial." On the contrary, as Peter Li points out in his introduction to a special issue of Canadian Ethnic Studies on Racial and Ethnic Inequality (1994), the debate between "primordialists" and "social constructionists" is a longstanding one in the field of ethnic studies (1), and social constructionism has long been the dominant interpretation.¹⁴

While fiction by Aboriginal writers could of course be included within the scope of my study, I have chosen, with some regret, to exclude it. Obviously, I have done so, in part, because I must limit my study to a manageable corpus. But doing so can also be justified on more theoretical grounds. First, as a number of analysts have clearly pointed out (e.g. Armstrong, Godard, Blaeser, Dickason), Aboriginal peoples occupy a very different position in Canada than do immigrant ethnic groups (particularly

¹⁴ I first came across this notion in the late 1960's, particularly in the work of Frederick Barth, Ethnic Groups and Boundaries (1969), in which Barth argues that an ethnic group is primarily a social organization that is constantly being constructed by its members, who may draw on elements from a shared history which may or may not be verifiable, or on elements present in other group constructions, to do this. Barth also pointed out the connection between social power and group construction. As Eugene Roosens points out in Creating Ethnicity. The Process of Ethnogenesis (1989), "Like several other authors who published after him or at the same time (1969), Barth points out that ethnic self-affirmation of the ignoring or minimalization of ethnic identity is always related in one or another way to the defense of social or economic interests" (13). Thus anyone familiar with the anthropological and sociological literature of ethnicity written during this period was steeped in constructionist notions, and was hardly surprised when the impact of these ideas began to be felt in literary circles.

different position in Canada than do immigrant ethnic groups (particularly European ones) by virtue of their respective histories. As George Melnyk put it as early as the mid-1970s in response to a call by an Aboriginal leader for Native people to follow the path to success marked out by immigrants,

Initially, the comparison between native and ethnic makes sense when one is aware of their historical affinity as outcast minorities. But why did their histories diverge?...The answer lies in the ethnic's immigrant status. The very thing that gave him some problems at first was what assured his mobility. The white conquest was an immigrant conquest and the ethnic was part of it, while the Indian was its victim...He was the loser in the battle and he carried the scar. Not being white, he could not blend into the European mosaic. For the ethnic to identify with the victor is understandable; but for the native to do likewise is a travesty....

The native peoples are the *other half* of Western history. They are not a numerical half, but a psychological and metaphysical one. Without their participation, the Western identity is incomplete (Melnik 52-58).

One can also look to early post-colonial theorists, such as D.E.S. Maxwell, for a clear distinction between the post-colonial positions and hence the writing projects of Aboriginal writers and immigrant/ethnic writers. While the former have been colonized through invasion, the latter, however subordinate their position vis a vis the hegemonic groups, are nevertheless part of the settler project (Maxwell 1965: 82-3 as quoted in Ashcroft, et. al. 25). The same point has been made more recently by postcolonial analysts who admonish critics to "respect differences" among "different degrees, forms and histories of postcoloniality (Mukherjee, 2; Moore-Gilbert, 11) and by Native critics (Armstrong). As well, the discourse of difference in Canada has, at least in recent years, tended to put Aboriginal peoples in the category of "founding peoples" in Canada, comparable in theory (if not in practice) to the French and the English, while placing the "other ethnic groups" or "multicultural groups" in a third category (Augie and Fleras).

My study does not, then, include texts by Aboriginal writers. And, although the body of texts I draw on is still dauntingly large, it is nevertheless clearly limited on the basis of genre, author, subject and, broadly construed, by period. I have limited my study to texts produced in the twentieth century. Admittedly, this time frame is, from certain perspectives, impossibly large. For my purposes, however, such a large frame is not only justifiable, but necessary: justifiable because the four major waves of immigration that have transformed Canadian society began in 1896 and occurred, intermittently, over the course of this century to the present day; necessary, because my objective is to explore a literary mode, delineated not only on the basis of its authorship or subject matter, but on the basis of its encoding of resistance. Such an objective is best achieved by analyzing a number of texts, written over a fairly broad period.

Despite the abundance of recent texts relevant to my study, and the theoretical complexity of the task, my project here very clearly builds on my earlier work in that, through that initial analysis, I discovered a number of recurring themes and patterns. This suggested to me that one might see the texts I was analyzing as constituting a particular type of literature. However, when I was writing my Master's thesis in 1971, I could find no appropriate literary critical discourse to enable me to contextualize and articulate my insights, especially those involving the relationship between the narrative strategies I discovered and the politics of ethnicity and nation building I was also observing at close hand. Consequently, my sense of what this literature was "all about" as an element of the cultural dynamics of Canada remained largely inchoate (at least in literary terms), a minor subtext of my analysis of "social themes and ethnic character," articulated most directly in my argument for the existence of the category "immigrant novel."

My interest in ethnic minority literature and in Canadian ethnic studies more generally continued long after I completed my Masters thesis, as did my desire to

discover/develop a critical framework for appreciating it. However, it was not until some years later, when I came across Eli Mandel's pioneering article on what he called "ethnic voice" in Canadian literature (published in 1977 in a Canadian ethnic studies publication) that I felt I had the beginnings of a sophisticated literary critical vocabulary to delineate the body of texts I was interested in. Though not in a direct or linear fashion, this reading, combined with a serendipitous re-reading at about the same time of Margaret Atwood's *Survival* (1972), with its emphasis on the prevalence of "victims" in Canadian literature, and on the possibility of this portrayal being a starting point for resistance; and of Dennis Lee's "Cadence, country, silence: writing in colonial space" (1974), with its emphasis on the difficulty of writing both within and against the colonized position, pointed me toward a clearer understanding of the connections in Canada between social and political forces and cultural expression, and laid the groundwork for a postcolonial dimension to my present project.

Out of Mandel's willingness to explore "the sociology of writing" despite its "genuine theoretical difficulties," came his concept of "ethnic voice" and his definition of it as describing "a literature existing at an interface of two cultures, a form concerned with defining itself, its voice, the dialectic of self and other and the duplicities of self-creation, transformation and identities"(Mandel 65). Equally useful to me was his penetrating discussion of recurring narrative patterns in the work of Mordecai Richler, Leonard Cohen, Irving Layton, John Marlyn and F.P. Grove, which he thought were best represented by "...Sartre's 'whirligig'", or

an opposition in which the opposing forces endlessly turn into one another and in which an endless oscillation between them appears to be the only mode of the individual so trapped (59).

These insights, encapsulated in his assertion that "Ethnicity...sets into motion for the writer a whirligig or duality that can only be resolved in a myth, a restructured self, a fictional being"(61), confirmed my own sense that the ethnic minority writing I had analyzed was shaped by complex patterns of opposition that not only represented the difficulties of immigrant and ethnic "Otherness," but also in some way worked to transform the social and cultural space evoked. But even more importantly, Mandel's article gave me a few key terms and images that seemed particularly apropos to my project, particularly "ethnic voice" and "whirligig narrative patterns." It also confirmed my sense of the significance of these texts in the broader contexts of English-Canadian society and culture.

My sense of the significance of "ethnic literature" was also bolstered substantially by my reading of the American critic, Werner Sollors. His article, "Literature and Ethnicity" which appeared in the *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups* in 1980 was especially useful. Sollors' wide-ranging approach to the topic suggested the very considerable significance of the intersection between ethnicity and literature in American culture: how the topic provided a means of illuminating some of the dynamics of exclusion and inclusion fundamental to American nation building. Sollors' analysis also gave me both a rationale and a model for an interdisciplinary, Canadian-Studies approach to the topic of ethnicity and Canadian literature. (Sollors' wide-ranging discussion was very much in the style of the Canadian Studies and American Studies discourses I had been influenced by both as an undergraduate and as graduate student through the works of such (cultural history) critics as Vernon Parrington, Howard Mumford Jones, Henry Steele Commager, Perry Miller, Irving Howe, Leo Marx, Richard Hofstadter, Sacvan Bercovitch, Richard Slotkin, Ramsay Cook, William Kilbourne and others, all

of whom, unlike New Critics, connected American literature (or Canadian history) with broader social/historical/cultural contexts.) This rationale consisted of a few key and inter-connected assertions about the relationship between ethnicity and American culture.

For example, Sollors argued that ethnicity, as "a tenuous ancestry" and "as the interplay of different ancestries" is perhaps "the most crucial aspect of the American national character." As well, he saw the tension between modernity and ethnicity as a fundamental catalyst of American social and intellectual life, with American culture generally symbolizing modernity, and with ethnicity functioning "...as a formidable expression of a countervailing yearning for history and community" (648). And further, he posited the great significance of American literature in this central and perpetually energizing tension:

American literature is a rich repository of the footprints of ethnicity. American writers from Cotton Mather to Richard Wright, from Charles Brockden Brown to Pietro di Donato, from William Faulkner to Hisaye Yamamoto have developed such a systematic religious symbolism of ethnicity and American identity that American literature as a whole can be read as the ancestral footstep or coded hieroglyph of ethnic group life of the past and ethnic tensions in the present....

Ethnicity is a pervasive theme in all American literature, whether in the shape of ethnicity as ancestry or ethnicity as diversity ("Ethnicity" 649).

These assertions provided an additional heuristic tool in the form of fundamental assumptions about the critical significance of ethnicity in immigrant-receiving (or settler) societies such as the United States and Canada and about the central role of culture (especially literature) in both registering and shaping the discourses of ethnicity and nation building--of what Sollors later called the discourses of "descent" and "consent" (1986).

In addition to these two key ideas, Sollors delineated very clearly and succinctly the fundamental points at issue in these evolving and interrelated discourses:

The relationship of an American identity with pre-American pasts, the interaction of people with different pre-American pasts, and the emergence of an American character...("Ethnicity" 649).

Further, as well as emphasizing the recurrence and significance of these issues as literary themes, and of literature as a site where the points of tension between these discourses are negotiated, Sollors pointed to their impact on American literary forms, "...from the first emergence of Americanized genres to the highest achievements of the American Renaissance, from the opposition of 'romance' and 'novel' to the rise of modernist and proletarian writing" (649).

Clearly, Sollors' analysis aimed at illuminating the dynamics of American culture, not Canadian; and, in reading Sollors, I was, of course, very aware of the dangers of misapplying his analysis to the Canadian situation. However, some of his concepts are useful to the Canadian analyst if she is sensitive to both the differences and the similarities between the two societies. Of course, the two nations originated quite differently, in ways that created two distinctive national cultures. Canada's history was profoundly counter-revolutionary and colonial (Lipset; Ramirez 146; Reimers and Troper). These two inter-related factors, fueled by the presence and persistence of the French-Canadian culture in Quebec, along with a formidable geography and climate, have been particularly important in shaping the ongoing negotiation in Canada between diversity and nation building, which overall reinforced the legitimacy of the British presence in Canada, and of an ethnically based hierarchy, which was complicated, but generally further bolstered, by the presence of French-Canadians. This negotiation also worked to construct what

Northrop Frye has called the "garrison mentality," a tendency to view the outside world, both natural and human, as threatening (McGregor), and to erect barriers against it. And it accentuated what might be called a general European predisposition to view the North-American landscape in primarily economic terms. These cornerstones of Canadian sensibility have been expressed in the country's evolving processes and institutions related to consent and descent, and in the continuing resistance in Canada to a unitary narrative of nationhood.

Equally important in the United States, on the other hand, have been its revolutionary origins and its early commitment to building an independent, new-world nation based on individual rights and on its interrelated sense of its own special destiny as a haven and a beacon for the world. Indeed, Sollors captures this notion when he explains the impact of Puritan typology on American meta-narratives of origin. He points out how the word "ethnic" carries with it the lingering connotation from the original Greek *ethnikos* (heathen), thereby helping to construct and heighten a religious dimension to the contrast between "ethnic" and American. This contrast is then captured and dramatized in American meta-narratives of nation in terms of biblical imagery. As Sollors puts it,

The most important source of literary ethnicity in North America is in the application of biblical images to the colonists' new experiences. Biblical analogies to the drama of seafaring and settling in new worlds are common in colonial literatures; in Puritan New England, however, a systematic religious symbology was applied to the transatlantic crossing....

The events of early American history were, with the help of typology, rhetorically transformed into the biblical drama, as New Englanders interpreted their transatlantic voyage as a New Exodus, their mission as an Errand into the Wilderness, and their role as that of a New Israel....

Among the most prevalent typological elements are the imagery of a continued exodus from Egyptian--Old World bondage to the shores of the American Promised Land, the creation of American protagonists as Adamic and Christic figures, and the

related notion of the welding of an American 'new man.' The image of the New Exodus provides a sacral meaning to a secular migration (649-650).

As an American immigrant to Canada, I was particularly sensitive to the general differences in the national sensibilities of Americans and Canadians, and I have continually attempted to incorporate this sensitivity quite consciously into my reading practice in the form of an interrogative approach to my own responses, which in turn has required me to carefully ground texts in their respective Canadian and American contexts.

As a student of both American and Canadian literatures, I was sensitive to Sollors' point about the significance of the New Exodus narrative, not only because I thought it perceptive vis a vis American literature, but also because it highlighted and clarified the differences I had been noting for years between Canadian and American narratives of immigration and nation. Thus, paradoxically, I found Sollors' analysis useful in part because it provided an important means for defining by negation certain key features of the Canadian narratives of ethnicity I was attempting to understand and appreciate. For example, the virtual absence in Canadian immigrant narratives of the Puritan typology and of the New Exodus narrative, with its heightened religious dimension, became clearer and more significant to me in light of Sollors' analysis.

But I was also sensitive to the similarities between Canada and the United States and between Canadian and American literatures--similarities that made Sollors' delineation of the fundamental issues involved in the relationship between ethnicity, nation building and literature a useful addition to my conceptual framework. After all, Canada and the United States have played rather similar roles in the centuries-old drama of the mass migration of peoples (Palmer "Ethnicity and Pluralism"; Hoerder). The institutions and narratives of both have been shaped by their vast geographies, their abundant resources, especially land, and the closely

related dynamics of European imperialism. Together they constituted for Europeans an undifferentiated 'New World,' a repository for European dreams of wealth and various kinds of utopias, and eventually a safety net for a variety of Europe's political, social and demographic problems (Jones): an ideal site of colonization. These historical and geographic forces, while producing two quite distinct political cultures, especially when viewed close-up, have also produced similarities in their political cultures, particularly when viewed from afar. Thus, while Alex de Tocqueville's perceptive observations in 1837 about the democratic and individualistic nature of America would have been less true of Canada, both then and now,¹⁵ the phenomenon he was observing was to some considerable extent a North American one: the lives and values of Canadians as well as Americans have been irrevocably shaped by the tensions between their European discursive inheritance and the material features of North American life. Both countries have been greatly influenced by their respective colonial relationships to Europe. This has meant that the 'defining moment' for each was in connection with its relationship to the British empire: rebellion on the one hand, loyalty on the other. And it has meant that, despite these seemingly opposite choices, the history of each has been defined by imperial expansion and its ideological underpinnings, apparent in both countries in the exploration/"taming" of rugged, largely unsettled land; the exploitation of vast resources; the pioneer settlement of an ever-expanding western frontier; the tragic destruction of indigenous peoples; the growth of a national consciousness and sensibility and of the bureaucratic structures that inevitably accompany them; the relentless march of industrialization, urbanization, and technology.

¹⁵ Some recent scholarship has suggested that these differences between Canadians and Americans, long viewed as quintessential, have been changing quite dramatically in recent years. See Neil Nevitte, *The Decline of Deference*, 1996.

And, of course, closely linked with all of these has been the immigration of vast numbers of increasingly diverse peoples. Both Canada and the United States have grappled with the challenges presented by a series of mass migrations set in motion by complex economic, political, and social processes both without and within that have, over the past four hundred years, transformed them. Both have faced similar "mundane" problems related to diversity such as how to facilitate a workable fit between vast numbers of increasingly diverse newcomers and existing economic, social, political and cultural structures. Both have had to devise systems to deal with the recruitment, screening, settlement, adjustment and integration of immigrants (Ramirez; Palmer, "Ethnicity and Pluralism"; Reimers and Troper). Both have been shaped by complex and evolving socio-economic hierarchies profoundly informed by ethnicity, race and class (Porter; Dinnerstein and Reimers; McCall; Li). And, as part of these processes, both have developed discourses of ethnicity and nationhood, of "descent and consent," to use Sollors' phrase.

Another useful cluster of concepts which Sollors' 1980 article provided me emerged from his pointing to an oblique but rich connection between socio/economic inequity, ethnic writing and social/political activism:

In the second half of the 19th century, the rise of serious ethnic literature was linked with an opposition to stereotypes and with the claims for realism and authenticity against malicious, sentimental, or careless distortion. American writers have traditionally tried to present their imaginative products as 'truth' in order to avoid religious, moral, or pragmatic censure. But in the case of ethnic writing, the claim that literature represented truth meant more than that. It stood for the demand for an 'inside view' of ethnicity and for a growing concern with social reform. The alliance of ethnic realism, spokespersonship, and social criticism has remained powerful for more than a century (658).

This, along with his closely related delineation (and that of Daniel Aaron, upon whose work he draws) of the apologist role of ethnic writers, and of the

evolution of the position of the ethnic writer from "local colorist" to mainstream writer with "double vision" (Sollors, "Ethnicity" 658), along with the work of such Canadian analysts as Joseph Pivato who has over a number of years pointed to the connection between ethnic minority writing and social realism, helped me to articulate what I saw as a somewhat similar connection between literature and the politics of ethnicity in Canada, and to relate this connection to the ambivalent, or as Mandel put it, "whirligig" narrative patterns that informed that writing. In short, Sollors' work provided me with a much more fully articulated map of the textual landscape I was studying than I had before, one that could be productively combined with Pivato's analysis of the emergence of ethnic minority (particularly Italian-Canadian) writing, Mandel's valuable insights into the psycho-social dimensions of ethnic writing and its formal patterns, and later with postcolonial notions such as "intra-metropolitan forms of 'Othering'" and textual resistance.

Sollors' subsequent books (1986; 1989; 1993) have been similarly important for their many particular insights into the various forms that ethnic writing has taken in the United States, into the complex relationship between ethnicity, modernity and literature, and for the ways they adapt his earlier scholarship to a more explicitly poststructuralist framework, suggesting its compatibility with an emphasis on the social construction of ethnicity. Against the backdrop of a growing body of work--both fiction and criticism--in Canada, the series of questions Sollors raises in his introduction to *The Invention of Ethnicity* (1989) were particularly useful:

By calling ethnicity--that is, belonging and being perceived by others as belonging to an ethnic group--an 'invention,' one signals an interpretation in a modern and postmodern context....

Is not the ability of ethnicity to present (or invent) itself as a 'natural' and timeless category the problem to be tackled? Are not ethnic groups part of the historical process, tied to the history of modern nationalism? Though they may pretend to be eternal and essential, are they not of rather recent origin and eminently pliable and unstable? Is not modernism an important *source* of ethnicity? Do not new ethnic groups continually emerge? Even where they exist over long time spans, do not ethnic groups constantly change and redefine themselves? What is the active contribution literature makes, as a productive force, to the emergence and maintenance of communities by reverberation and of ethnic distinctions...How is the illusion of ethnic 'authenticity' stylistically created in a text? (xiv).

Thus the analytical perspective in this text provided a valuable discussion of the intersection I was interested in between ethnicity/literature/national culture, one that served as an important link between the discourse of ethnic studies, with its sophisticated sociological interpretations of ethnicity, including the various ways in which it is constructed and evolves (Isajiw; Driedger; Ng; Breton; Li) and literary critical practice that might illuminate Canadian ethnic minority writing. This is not to say, however, that I found Sollors' vision completely compatible with my own, or unproblematically applicable to Canada, which, as Padolsky, among others, has pointed out, is much more resistant of a unifying narrative than is the United States; its discourse of difference is considerably more pluralistic (Ethnicity and Race). This is, I believe, why Sollors uses the notion of "invention," which he draws from such analysts as Jacques Derrida, James Clifford, Hayden White, Eric Hobsbawm, Michel Foucault, Ernest Gellner (and Frederick Barth) to argue not only that ethnicity is an 'invention,' but also that ethnicities are "interchangeable." In my view, the latter conclusion is unwarranted; that is, as Raymond Breton and John Berry (among other analysts) make clear, while the intra-and inter-group processes that groups engage in to continually construct themselves (and transform themselves in relation to particular

circumstances, i.e. to invent themselves) are arguably similar, the 'products' of these processes are clearly infinitely diverse, depending on a myriad of variables, including such intangible factors as the symbolic inventiveness of group elites (Breton 7-21).

Nor does Sollors distinguish clearly between several different types of inventions of group identity. For example, he too easily, in this particular discussion, conflates nationality and ethnicity. Most modern nations are ethnically and culturally heterogeneous civic communities that require considerable "imagining"-- through narratives, flags, anthems and the like (conventions of nationhood that developed in the nineteenth century) precisely because they are not "ethnic groups." This is not because ethnic groups are primordial, but rather because they are constructed as smaller, more "homogeneous" units on the basis of a greater number of points of connection than (most) modern nations--religion, ancestry, cultural practice, proximity. Indeed, as a number of analysts have pointed out, the two main types of nationalism--civic nationalism and ethnic (or traditional) nationalism--are distinguished precisely on the degree to which ethnic and national identification coincide in each type (e.g. Balthazar 65-71). Canadians, constantly reminded of the persistence of ethnic nationalism in Quebec, and of the difficulties of reconciling the two types, both within Quebec and within Canada, are perhaps less likely than Americans to equate ethnic and national identity. Nor, with the focus on language and culture that has characterized the discourse of difference in Canada are they perhaps as likely to see cultures as interchangeable commodities, not necessarily because they view them as primordial, but simply because they are different social constructions, and given Canada's particular cultural and institutional history, their constant

negotiation with one another vis a vis issues of culture/language/inequity is often very public.¹⁶

Sollors is similarly careless, in my view, in his presentation of the primordialist view of ethnicity, which he claims to be the prevailing one, without specifying the discourses (popular? literary?) in which this may be so, and then uses what he terms "newer anthropological, sociological and historical thinking" (including the work of Frederik Barth which influenced a generation of ethnic studies scholars thirty years ago) to make the constructionist case, thereby clearly undercutting the notion that the primordialist view dominates the study of ethnicity. He further confuses the discussion by using an example to represent a primordialist analysis which is one often used to support the constructionist case:

It is not any a priori cultural *difference* that makes ethnicity. The Chinese laundryman does not learn his trade in China; there are no laundries in China' (xvi).

Of course the phenomenon of occupational specialization among particular groups is a well known process of immigrant adaptation, and as any number of articles on the subject in scholarly journals, including Canadian Ethnic Studies, suggest, it is generally regarded as an "outcome(s) of social construction based on unequal relationships"(Li, Introduction 1) rather than as evidence of any primordial differences. Thus for many--perhaps most--ethnic studies analysts, Sollors admonition that "It (ethnicity) marks an

¹⁶ Interestingly, the postcolonial critique of liberal pluralism is often based on this notion that pluralistic models simply reduce different groups to interchangeable commodities. (See, for example, Diana Brydon, "The White Inuit Speaks 194). Padolsky (and others) challenge this view as it applies to Canada, noting that "(T)o reduce pluralism (without historical differentiation) to a hegemonic colonizing practice is, I fear, merely to create another theoretical 'master narrative.' In practice, at least in Canada, discussions of pluralism and multiculturalism take place on a very complex territory of dispute and contestation--between Quebec and English Canada, between Aborigines and others, between minorities and majorities, between differing views within minority groupings, between the claims of individuals and groups...Far from being a simple and static hegemonic strategy, Canadian pluralism/multiculturalism has been precisely the terrain on which Canadian ethnic and racial groups have been argued and developed... ." (26).

acquired modern sense of belonging that replaces visible, concrete communities whose kinship symbolism ethnicity may yet mobilize in order to appear more natural" and further that "The trick that it passes itself off as blood, as 'thicker than water,' should not mislead interpreters to take it at face value. It is not a thing but a process" (xiv-v) is hardly news.¹⁷

However, Sollors' incorporation of this social science discourse into a discourse of literary analysis was nevertheless useful to me as a model, and although his essay moves in the direction of deconstructing ethnicity as a legitimate cultural force, it nevertheless resists such a reading, asserting that "(L)ooking at ethnicity as modern does not imply that ethnic conflicts thereby appear less 'real' simply because they may be based on an 'invention,' a cultural construction. It also does not suggest that ethnic consciousness is weak because there is much interaction and syncretistic borrowing at its core" (xv). As well, despite the reservations I have indicated, I found in it a version of the interrelated questions that particularly interested me, and that I have modified and identified as central to my project here. What has been the nature of the relationship in Canada between ethnic hierarchy and literary production? In particular, what role has fiction written by "other-ethnic- group" 'insiders' played in negotiating the spaces created by ethnic hierarchy? Unlike Sollors, however, I am not so much interested in how the "illusion of ethnic 'authenticity'" is "created in a text", authenticity in the

¹⁷ Many Canadian analysts have explored ethnicity as social construction and/or occupational specialization as an outcome of unequal relationships in a variety of contexts. See, for example, W. Isajiw's "Definitions of ethnicity," *Ethnicity*, 1, 1974, 111-24; also his "Olga in Wonderland: Ethnicity in Technological Society," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 9.1, 1977, 77-85; Roxanna Ng, "Constituting Ethnic Phenomenon: An Account from the Perspective of Immigrant Women," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 13.1 (1981) 97-108. For more recent articles, see Constance and John de Roche, "Black and White: Racial Construction in Television Police Dramas," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 23.3, 1991, 69-91; Anton Allahar, "More than Oxymoron: Ethnicity and the Social Construction of Primordial Attachment," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 26.3, 1994, 18-33. On occupational specialization, see Peter Li, *Chinese in Canada*, Toronto: OUP, 1988. See also *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 19.3 Special Issue: The Chinese Experience in Canada (1987).

'primordial' sense Sollors seems to be referring to in the above passage seeming somewhat beside the point, but rather in how fictional texts "represent immigrant and/or ethnic experience, and further if and how they shape that representation into a site of resistance and negotiation.

Fiction relevant to my project is hardly in short supply. By the late 1980s, there had been a flowering in Canada of ethnic minority writing as well as of relevant Canadian criticism (Hinz vii). Particularly significant for me were the works of Italian and Asian writers--such fictions as Frank Paci's trilogy, *The Italians* (1978), *Black Madonna* (1982) and *The Father* (1984); Caroline M. DiGiovanni's anthology of poetry and fiction, *Italian Canadian Voices, An Anthology of Poetry and Prose (1946-1983)* and Joy Kogawa's *Obasan* (1981)--since they were presented to some considerable degree as attempts to tell an untold story, to set the record straight, by writers who identified themselves as members of the groups they describe. As I have already mentioned, the work of writer and critic, Joseph Pivato, was especially important at this point because it brought an insider perspective to criticism of Italian-Canadian literature, both in his own work, and that of other Italian-Canadian critics, as represented in his edited collection, *Contrasts: Comparative Essays on Italian-Canadian Writing* (1985). Pivato also provided a seminal phrase, "breaking the silence," which he used (1985, 1986) to describe what he saw as a pervasive preoccupation of Italian-Canadian writers. By encompassing the interrelated notions of struggle and revision, Pivato's phrase seemed to capture the essence not only of the work of many Italian-Canadian writers, such as Frank Paci and C.D. Minni, but also of many other writers I was interested in: indeed, of the larger project of ethnic apology (resistance) that Sollors had previously delineated.

For example, the idea that a complex of socio-cultural forces can silence particular groups of people, requiring their storytellers to exert an extraordinary effort in order to create a space for that story in the national discourse, seemed fundamental to appreciating the work of Japanese-Canadian writers attempting to articulate what had happened to their families during the Second World War (Sunahara). Two such writers, Kevin Irie and Joy Kogawa, for example, foreground the difficulty of their task in images of silence. In his poem "In Retrospect and Consequence," Irie notes the difficulty of breaking through "a Japanese silence" that "pools like tea in China cups/The silence at the end of words"(1981). Similarly, in *Obasan* (1981) Kogawa prefaces her text with a brief but intense analysis of silence and of the enormous difficulty of making the "stone" word "burst(s) with telling...."

This growing body of literature and criticism enabled me to develop an increasingly coherent analytical perspective, including a series of mutually compatible and illuminating critical terms, and a reading practice that seemed increasingly appropriate to the fiction. For example, Mandel's "whirligig" and binary patterns seemed to amplify and provide a means of exemplifying Sollors' delineation of the tension between ethnicity and nation, between descent and consent; Sollor's emphasis on the significance of the apologist writer's ambivalent position on both literary form and content was similarly exemplified in Pivato's description of the project of Italian-Canadian writers as that of "breaking the silence."

Also contributing to my analytical framework were articles by Henry Kreisel (1982), Ted Blodgett (1982), Robert Kroetsch (1985), and Enoch Padolsky (1986-87, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1996). The latter two critics were particularly important, Kroetsch for his further delineation of binary narrative patterns

in 'ethnic' fiction and Padolsky for his emphasis on appropriate critical terminology and approaches, his championing of the term "ethnic minority writing," his insistence on the importance of this writing, his attempts to forge links between Canadian literary discourses and those of Canadian ethnic studies.¹⁸ Beginning in the late 1980s, I encountered a critical perspective that enabled me to bring my approach to ethnic minority writing in Canada per se into sharper focus--that offered by postcolonial theory and, to a lesser extent, by postmodernism. Linda Hutcheon's *THE CANADIAN POSTMODERN, A Study of Contemporary English-Canadian Fiction* (1988) provided a particularly lucid and useful discussion of the postmodern sensibility in the Canadian context. Hutcheon highlighted the complex shift from modernism to postmodernism, noting the relationship of this shift to the cultural positions and strategies of writers:

Whether postmodern writers be Canadian or Latin American, British, American, Italian, or German, they are always in a sense 'agents provocateurs'--taking pot shots at the culture of which they know they are unavoidably a part but that they still wish to criticize. This almost inevitably puts the postmodern writer into a marginal or 'ex-centric' position with regard to the central or dominant culture, because the paradox of underlining and undermining cultural 'universals' (or revealing their grounding in the 'particular') implicitly challenges any notions of centrality in (and centralization of) culture (3).

It seemed increasingly clear to me that the "ethnic voice," as Mandel had described it, was, in light of Hutcheon's delineation at least, a kind of postmodern voice. That is, emerging from "the interface of two cultures," it

¹⁸ In his article, "Canadian Ethnic Minority Literature in English," in Berry and LaPonce, eds., *Ethnicity and Culture in Canada. The Research Landscape*. Toronto: UT Press, 1994, 361-386, Padolsky reiterates his view that minority literature and criticism constitute an important inter-textual site for further investigation. His recent article on postcolonial approaches to ethnic minority writing follows an earlier attempt to bridge literary and ethnic studies discourses, "Establishing the two-way street: Literary criticism and ethnic studies," *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, 22.1, 1990, 22-37.

undermined assumptions of universality; as "a form concerned with defining itself...and the duplicities of self creation" (3), it subverted traditional literary forms. Hutcheon's discussion also highlighted women writers and feminist discourse as interrogators of male-centred discourse, arguing that their efforts had ultimately "come together" with "poststructuralist challenges to the bastions of liberalism" (108) to open up social, political and cultural spaces for women. Feminist discourse was not, of course, new to me, since, like others of my generation, I had been greatly influenced by the evolution of "Second Wave" feminism. Moreover, the particular relationship of feminist discourse to immigrant women had been for some time of interest to me and others working in the field of ethnic studies in Canada.¹⁹ The impact of feminism on literary studies was also of interest, and I was influenced by my reading of such Anglo American feminist critics as Adrienne Rich, Elaine Showalter, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar and others, including Australian critics Kay Schaffer and Bronwen Levy and later of the "French feminist" critics such as Hélène Cixous--all of whom highlighted in one way or another the problematics of "female voice."

The connections between feminist and postcolonial discourses became increasingly apparent to me through my reading of a number of women writers as well as such postcolonial texts as *The Empire Writes Back*. Hutcheon also prepared me, if somewhat indirectly, to make connections between the discourses of feminism, ethnic studies, Canadian studies and postcolonial theory, by highlighting the relationship between "postmodern" texts, feminist texts and "the general history of de colonization" (7).²⁰ So too

¹⁹ In 1981 the topic of "women and ethnicity" was the focus of a special issue of Canadian Ethnic Studies, which highlighted the "double jeopardy" experienced by immigrant women in Canada.

²⁰ One cannot, of course, assume an easy compatibility between postmodernism and postcolonialism. A number of postcolonial theorists and critics see postmodernism as "a new

did the "ficto-criticism" of Aritha van herk, in such articles as "Crow B(e)ars and Kangaroos of the Future: the Post-Colonial Ga(s)p" in which her narrator-critic/writer concludes that "To be a woman of the future, to leap into freedom, she must subvert a male defined sexuality. She must find a way to leap across that moment of hesitation beyond the colonizing text of man" (54).

Such analyses enabled me to see more clearly minority ethnic writing in Canada in relation to other sites of colonization/Othering: to appreciate the complex connection between a writer's position vis a vis dominant discourse and textual strategies of resistance. For example, Hutcheon argues throughout *The Canadian Postmodern* that the characteristic modes of postmodern writing are "(P)arody and irony"(7), which work to subvert the dominant discourse:

What postmodernism has done is show how the 'natural is in fact the 'constructed', the made, the social. In addition, it is never free from an intimate relation with power (12).

This notion-- that an ironic and/or parodic mode and a concern with power relationships are distinguishing characteristics of postmodern texts contextualized certain features of "the ethnic voice." I had already noted the ironic mode in many fictions by 'insider' writers, as had John Roberts in his article "Irony in an Immigrant Novel: John Marlyn's *Under the Ribs of Death*" (1981). Here Roberts argues that the immigrant experience of living between two different worlds almost inevitably produces an ironic vision, which at times leads to parody:

universalizing discourse which parallels the implicit ethnocentrism of the 'humanism' which accompanied the colonial project; others are somewhat less critical. See Moore-Gilbert 121-30 for a valuable discussion of "Modernity, The Postcolonial and the Postmodern." See also Stephen Slemon "Modernism's Last Post" for a clear distinction between the two on the basis of referentiality. See also Robert Young, 114-15.

Irony is intrinsic to a problematic reality. It embodies a contradiction between the human desire for ultimate truth and the realization that no truth exists. If truth cannot be attained, then human values are artificial and transitory. Irony becomes not only the tool of gentle mockery but also the weapon of cynical nihilistic denial...(41)

As Roberts clarifies, perhaps more than most people, immigrants (and their children) occupy a psycho/social space "in between" shaped by differing versions of reality that compete for dominance: they live in a social and cultural space defined by this competition. Literature written from inside this experience often represents ambivalent space and the constant translation and negotiation that defines it. Not surprisingly, Roberts argues, "...Marlyn utilizes irony to illuminate this world of shifting perspectives...He uses sarcasm, parody and dramatic irony to evoke the illusions which leave Sandor confused, alienated and supporting a false identity in a corrupt Canadian culture" (41). Hutcheon and others helped me to see this important ethnic minority text thus illuminated by Roberts' commentary within a larger inter textual context, as a "...node within a network"(Hutcheon, *The Canadian* 87).²¹ This idea also helped me to make greater sense of what I had noted as a preoccupation in ethnic minority writing with the socio-economic power structure, with John Porter's "vertical mosaic"; and of Robert Kroetsch's focus on the tension between success and failure as a particularly important binary pattern in ethnic minority fiction (1985).

Hutcheon and the other postmodern and postcolonial critics I was reading at about the same time brought the broadly political nature of the fiction I was analyzing into sharper focus and pointed to important

²¹ Here Hutcheon is quoting Michel Foucault's comment in *The Archeology of Knowledge*. Trans. Sheridan Smith. New York: Harper and Row, 1976, p. 23 about the significance of intertextuality.

connections between political positioning and literary features. For example, reading Edward Said's *Orientalism*, which I came across in the mid 1980s, (and later his *Culture and Imperialism*) clarified the relationships between imperialism, ethnocentrism and literary construction. As well, the terminology and perspective offered by Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, particularly the notions of colonization and de-colonization (both as metaphor and as historical process), and of displacement were particularly relevant to my reading practice.

These postcolonial perspectives, as delineated in *The Empire Writes Back*, as well as in texts I came across slightly later, such as Spivak's *The Post-Colonial Critic* and Stephen Slemon's article, "Magic Realism as Post-Colonial Discourse" (and later his *After Europe*, a collection of essays he edited with Helen Tiffin) further enhanced my appreciation of the relationships between colonization and textual resistance. I became increasingly convinced that a postcolonial framework could complement the inter-connected notions I was already working with: that it could provide a larger vision and some explanatory power as well as the flexibility needed to ground my analysis in the specific contexts from which the texts I was reading emerged. It also enabled me to see more clearly the nature of the discursive connections (some of which had been highlighted in the discourses of radical political movements beginning as early as the 1960s), between North American protest movements (including those connected with ethnicity) and nationalist movements in the 'third world';²² in other words, it enabled me to begin more systematically to "...link the cultural criticism of subaltern

²² See Robert Young's discussion in *White Mythologies* (11-12) of the origins of this problematic term, which he continues to use in the revolutionary 'third estate' sense in which it was first used.

movements in the West with that of postauthoritarian movements around the world" (Cultural Studies Group 531).

For example, in Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin's assertion that "...a study of the subversive strategies employed by postcolonial writers would reveal both the configurations of domination and the imaginative and creative responses to the condition"(33), I found an indirect description of my own project and thus a way of linking the various insights into the nature of "the ethnic voice" in Canadian literature. Mandel's observation that "Ethnicity ...sets in motion for the writer a whirligig or duality that can only be resolved in myth" (61) could, I believed, be placed within or at least complemented by a post-colonial framework. His image highlights the difficulties of what later postcolonial analysis would formulate as "coming to voice" within/against/alongside a hegemonic discourse in which to be "ethnic" is to be "Other," to be caught up in a struggle to negotiate an identity that is not simply a function of that Othering (Young 14-20).

Mandel also highlights the ambivalence of the "ethnic voice" in ways congruent with Homi Bhabha's discussion of the complex "psychic ambivalence which accompanies colonial exploitation and domination" (Bhabha, *Articulating the Archaic* 131, as quoted in Moore-Gilbert, 147). Mandel clearly points to "the configurations of domination" that have shaped immigrant and/or ethnic perspectives in Canada as well as to the "the imaginative and creative responses" to them. So too does Kroetsch in his delineation of "characteristic binary patterns", which connects him to a persistent postcolonial discussion/debate about binary patterns and breaking out of them in the works of Said, Spivak, Bhabha and others (Young; Moore-Gilbert). Sollors' discussion of the ethnic writer as apologist and Joseph Pivato's discussion of "breaking the silence" also have counterparts in

postcolonial discourse. All of these critics foreground forces of domination and erasure, and point to ways in which resistance is expressed in fiction.

Like these earlier Canadian critics who drew attention to a "silenced" literary voice, postcolonial critics draw attention to a body of literatures that are linked by their having "emerged in their present form out of the experience of colonization and asserted themselves by foregrounding tension with the imperial power, and by emphasizing their differences from the assumptions of the imperial centre"(Ashcroft et. al. 2). They also suggest a reading strategy appropriate to a postcolonial perspective in which the methodology historically linked with the study of English is dangerously outmoded. That older methodology, which involved "...the fixing of texts in historical time and the perpetual search for the determinants of a single, unified and agreed meaning ... proceeded from a single ideological climate..." and "enthroned" a "privileging norm" which *ipso facto* denied the value of anything from the margins (Ashcroft et. al. 3).

As pioneer post colonial theorist D.E.S. Maxwell and many who have come after him point out (Moore-Gilbert) literatures produced on the margins of empire share a paradoxically crippling and enabling awareness of a gap between language and place which distinguishes them from the English literary tradition. This is true of what Maxwell called "settler" colonies, as well as "invaded" colonies:

In the first, the writer brings his own language--English--to an alien environment and a fresh set of experiences: Australia, Canada, New Zealand. In the other, the writer brings an alien language--English--to his own social and cultural inheritance: India, West Africa. Yet the categories have a fundamental kinship....[The]'intolerable wrestle with words and meanings' has as its aim to subdue the experience to the language, the exotic life to the imported tongue (Maxwell 1965: 82-3 as quoted in Ashcroft, et. al. 25).

Thus, ironically, Canadian 'national literature' shares with Aboriginal literature and ethnic minority fiction in Canada having been greatly influenced by their subordinate position vis a vis a centre of discursive power.

Using the eclectic framework I have described, I attempt in the chapters that follow to uncover some of the ways that this latter fiction has served as a vehicle for representing and resisting the social, political, and cultural marginalization experienced in "English" Canada by non-British immigrants and their descendants. The social, political and cultural spaces occupied by all immigrants to Canada have been shaped by the country's dual colonial legacy; in part as a result of this, newcomers to English-speaking Canada whose backgrounds were neither British nor French were relegated to a complex "third" position.²³ The dynamics of negotiating this "third space" throughout the twentieth century have been amply documented and explored by Canadian historians and sociologists, (as, for example, in addition to the Royal Commission, by, among many others, Porter, Avery, Burnet, *Coming Canadians* 25-56; Palmer, *Immigration, Nativism; and Li*). With this body of historical and sociological scholarship as a context, I focus on the representation of marginality in fiction that evokes the experiences of a wide cross-section of "other" ethnic groups. I have focused on fiction (both short stories and novels) in order to look at the ample development of character, place and event which these forms allow. My methodology has been to combine close reading and comparative reading of a number of texts, taking into careful account the multiple discursive contexts that have shaped their production and reception.

²³One is reminded here of Homi Bhabha's notion of the "third space" as a paradoxically enabling position (Moore-Gilbert, chapter 3), and of Spivak's description of the ambiguous impact of imperialism, as "an enabling violence".

In Chapter One, "Fictionalizing Immigrant and Ethnic Experience in Canada: Binary Sensibilities, Binary Patterns," I argue that binary patterns are structurally and thematically central to fictional representation of immigrant/ethnic marginality in ethnic minority fiction in Canada; and further, that these patterns--a series of interlocking dualisms--which invariably foreground the ambivalent spaces between them, illustrate the ways that these fictions have worked as sites of resistance, of inter cultural adjustment and adaptation, and ultimately of transformation, for both "host" and immigrant cultures.

In Chapter Two, "The Voices of Apology: Voices of the Second and Third Generations," I argue that there is an important connection between the binary patterns discussed in Chapter One, the processes of cultural transformation they embody and the generational mapping that is a common motif in the discourses of immigrant and/or ethnic experience. More specifically, that for a variety of reasons, historical and sociological as well as literary, generational difference is a key site of identity negotiation in the fiction I analyze. Imprecise and more metaphorical than historical (since generational positions are often constructed more as psycho-social orientations than as accurate genealogies), a three-generational schema is characteristically a major structural and thematic element in insider fiction about immigrant and/or ethnic experience; it serves as a vehicle for representing and shaping individual and communal transformation. Further, I argue that second- and third-generation writers occupy a pivotal position as mediators/negotiators ²⁴ in this discursive project--one that has

²⁴ My use of the term "apologist" is in the sense suggested by these two words. That is, an apologist is one who resists the prevailing definition of a particular situation/people through a written and/or spoken defense, i.e. through explaining and justifying, both of which involve deconstructive and reconstructive acts.

been greatly influenced by the connection in Canada between ethnicity and class (Porter; Clement; Li).

Having argued in Chapter Two that representations of the ethnic ghetto play a central role in the evocation of immigrant and/or ethnic experience, in Chapter Three, "Fictionalizing Space for the 'Other'" Men, Women and the Ethnic Ghetto," I analyze this role in more detail, arguing that the representation in a minority ethnic text of the ethnic ghetto (emblem *par excellence* of marginalization) is an indicator of that text's "alterity" (Soderlind 8), and of its de colonizing energy. That, along with the narrative and thematic features I have already highlighted, this representation can be understood as a strategy of resistance.

Taking the argument a bit further, I posit that while a great number of second/third generation ethnic minority writers use the ethnic ghetto in this way, it is often handled differently by male and female writers, and that this difference is significant, not only for what it may reveal about female immigrant and/or ethnic experience, or more particularly about the differing sensibilities of male and female writers, but also about the ways in which a text can function as a site of multiple resistance, a multi-layered counter discourse.

In Chapter 4, "Constructing Ethnicity as Social Criticism," I explore further the representation of inter-ethnic relations as a site of resistance. I argue that the 'insider' apologist project is very often one of incisive and far-reaching social criticism. Produced from a marginal, borderland position, this critique is often ambivalent, double-edged, at times highlighting the shortcomings of the minority group, at other times those of a generalized Canadian society. I focus in particular on texts by women and by "new immigrant" writers, often from former commonwealth countries. This

enables me to delineate some of the complex discursive connections among immigrant and/or ethnic apology, feminist and social criticism and postcolonial positioning. I argue that the social critique these texts offer is, in a variety of interrelated ways, counter-hegemonic, subversive of a univocal and hierarchical discursive practice.

CHAPTER ONE

Binary Sensibilities, Binary Patterns and Transformative Strategies

Eli Mandel, Robert Kroetsch, and other critics have argued that duality is a central motif in fiction written in Canada about immigrant and ethnic experience; that the sensibility evoked is one of tormented ambivalence. Mandel asserts that at the core of this "schizophrenia" is what R.D. Laing has called "a form of psychic anarchy" brought on by an "involuntary attempt of the self to free itself from a repressive social reality" (Mandel 58). According to Mandel, that "repressive social reality" is the state of painful otherness that is the result of being suspended between two worlds. He then suggests that the way out of this uncomfortable state (whether it is viewed as a psychological, a sociological, or a literary problem) is an act of imagination--fictionalizing, myth making (Mandel 61). Or, as Robert Kroetsch puts it, "(I)n ethnic writing there is often an attempt at healing by the rewriting of myths" (Kroetsch 69).

Other commentators have suggested that binary patterns are a characteristic feature of literature written in colonial societies. Abdul JanMohamed, for example, refers to a dualistic "cognitive framework" that shapes both politics and literary representation in such societies:

The dominant model of power- and interest-relations in all colonial societies is the manichean opposition between the putative superiority of the European and the supposed inferiority of the native. This axis in turn provides the central feature of the colonialist cognitive framework and colonialist literary representation (82).

JanMohamed argues that the fundamental discursive formation in hierarchical societies is dualistic and that those voices constructed as

"other"/lesser by this formation will both reflect this "manichean" structure and attempt to deconstruct it in order to be "heard." Edward Said's arguments, first in *Orientalism* and later in *Culture and Imperialism* foreground the binaries of occident/orient, colonizer/colonized, and in the latter in particular highlight the de colonization processes that, paradoxically, reinforce these binary poles as well as those (which he champions) that attempt to move beyond them, toward "...the possibility of discovering a world *not* constructed of warring essences" (*Culture* 229).¹

Taken together, these observations provide a basis for appreciating the fundamental structural framework that shapes many (if not most) insider fictions about immigrant and/or ethnic experience in English-speaking Canada. In this chapter I will argue that this framework is a postcolonial one: that the binary narrative patterns characteristic of these fictions both replicate and attempt to subvert the Anglo/Other dualism of the dominant discourse that has constructed the "ethnic other" in Canada.

Story after story and novel after novel about the experiences of immigrants and their progeny encodes dislocation through a series of interlocking binary patterns that are projected through a variety of interrelated channels in the texts, including structural, narrative and linguistic patterns as well as thematic motifs and tone. The *topoi* that seem to be the most relevant vehicles for this "rewriting of myths" are those of the edenic garden and the long journey.

¹ See Robert Young, *WHITE MYTHOLOGIES Writing History and the West* for an illuminating discussion of the historical and philosophical issues and arguments involved in "the dialectic of the same and the other" (4). See also Homi Bhabha, "The Other Question: Stereotype, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism" for a discussion of binary patterns and moving beyond them.

That these deep structures (Bal 5) should be the ones used to provide the fundamental frameworks for narratives of immigrant and ethnic experience is not surprising when one considers the literal appropriateness of the journey motif as well as how deeply entrenched in western civilization is the image of the New World as Garden of Eden, promised land.² Nor is it surprising that one looking for resistance in fictional texts would find binary patterns. In addition to the connection JanMohamed and others have suggested between colonial hierarchies and a manichean "cognitive framework," immigrant experience per se could also be said to contribute to such a cognitive framework. Informed as it is by a tension between old and new, there and here, past and present self, perception and language, the immigrant sensibility, one might argue, is virtually fated to experience the world through a binary framework (Ng 97-108; Sollors, *Beyond*). As Shirley Geok-lin Lim puts it in a recent article on the literature of Asian migration,

...minority writers, especially first-generation immigrant writers, the ones straight off the boat or the Boeing 747, contain within themselves this double perspective; as in an optical illusion, their identities encompass more than one figure simultaneously, like that figure that is both the image of the delectable young female and the ... profile of an old woman. This double... perspective exists simultaneously... (22).

The literature produced by this sensibility "explores and exudes, perhaps even celebrates, this bifurcated ... identity as both alien and native...posing for culture at large a problematized definition...of the concept of 'home' (Kain 8). With its interrogation of both the location and the meaning of home, it is

² This idea has been developed by a number of cultural historians. For example, Howard Mumford Jones gives it particular emphasis in his influential book, *O Strange New World, American Culture, the Formative Years*. Interestingly, Said refers to an aspect of this 'westering' idea as an important feature of Orientalism. The idea that west was the direction and location of progress, of the ideal, was expressed through a variety of literary texts, which "customarily saw the Orient as ceding its historical pre-eminence and importance to the world spirit moving westward away from Asia towards Europe ("Orientalism reconsidered" 215).

"literature existing at an interface of two cultures, a form concerned with defining itself, its voice, the dialectic of self and other and the duplicities of self creation, transformation and identities" (Mandel 65).

In this chapter, I argue that binary patterns are central to this "dialectic of self and other." That they are an important part of the way that 'insider' fictions of immigrant and/or ethnic experience in Canada have worked as sites of resistance: of inter cultural struggle, adjustment, and adaptation, and thereby ultimately of cultural transformation for both "host" and immigrant cultures; and, further, that the characteristic forms through which immigrant and ethnic experience in Canada have been fictionalized have been shaped in fundamental ways by the processes of inter-cultural adaptation.³

What are some of these binary patterns that both reflect and shape cross-cultural interaction? Kroetsch identifies five: success/failure; inferiority/superiority; revelation/concealment; integration/resistance; forgetting/remembling, and suggests that each of these tensions is played out in language itself and the polarity inherent in it between silence and speech (Kroetsch 65, 66). Kroetsch's delineation, if perhaps neither quite complete nor fully developed, suggests the shape of the framework through which immigrant and ethnic experience in Canada has been represented in fiction.

In order to indicate the complexity and significance of these patterns, I would add to Kroetsch's list the following: old world/new world;

³ See Raymond Breton (1991) and Gilles Paquet (1994) for interesting sociological discussions of the significance of symbolic representation in inter-cultural interaction and in particular as a vehicle of cultural transformation. Breton delineates five cultural-symbolic dimensions through which community is constructed symbolically and through which different communities interact: principles of inclusion and exclusion; representation of the past; visions of the future; principles guiding relations with other groups and the larger society; and salience attached to various lines of differentiation. Interestingly, these dimensions are explored in insider fictions of immigrant and ethnic experience, often as vehicles for developing the three resistance themes delineated by Said in *Culture and Imperialism* (215).

garden/inferno; loss/gain; parent/child; illusion/reality and victim/villain, all of which I explore in developing my central thesis. However, in this chapter, I focus on the old world/new world binary, first because it is arguably the one most fundamental to immigrant and ethnic experience and hence to fictionalizing it; second because it clearly illustrates the structural significance of binary patterns in the fiction this thesis addresses; and third because it is primarily through this polarity (along with that of success/failure, which I discuss more fully in subsequent chapters) that the journey and garden narratives are ultimately subverted, "re-written."

The Old World/New World Polarity

That a book published about the literature produced by German-speaking Canadians should be entitled *The Old World and the New* (Riedel 1984) would not surprise students of immigration. This duality is so familiar as to be a cliché; however, the extent to which it informs Canadian ethnic minority writing is sufficiently important to necessitate exploring it at the outset of this discussion. The old world/new world binary is the primary focus of many writers of fiction about immigrant and/or ethnic experience.⁴ For example, the essential differences between Europe and North America preoccupy German-Canadian writer, Frederick Philip Grove, explicitly in his *A Search for America* (1927) and *In Search of Myself* (1946) and indirectly in his novels that depict the nature and impact of materialism, such as *Fruits of the Earth* (1933) and *The Master of the Mill* (1944). The contrasts and yet inescapable connections between Europe and America also preoccupy Austrian-born Canadian writer, Henry Kreisel in his short stories and

⁴ See William Boelhower, "Italo-Canadian Poetry and Ethnic Semiosis" for an insightful discussion of the significance of this old world/new world polarity. Boelhower calls it "an aesthetic of spatial juxtaposition" that is the basis of a "topological system that generates an open series of binary isotopies."

particularly in his two novels, *The Rich Man* (1948) and *The Betrayal* (1964). Image after image in the work of these and other writers, whether contemporary or from an earlier era, contrast old and new worlds. Indeed, one could argue that Susanna Moodie's *Roughing it in the Bush* (1852), a "founding" text of Canadian literature in English, is built on the structural framework of the old world/new world binary, and that the exilic sensibility it expresses is, if not 'quintessentially Canadian,' as Margaret Atwood and others have argued, at least representative of a very significant and influential strand in Canadian discourse.⁵ Said argues that the voyage *topos* is a central one in both colonial and postcolonial discourse, a site of "battle over projections and ideological images." He quotes Joyce's *Ulysses* to suggest that in the discourse of resistance, the voyage "sounds 'the note of crisis, of banishment, banishment from the heart, banishment from home'" (Culture 210-11).

Czech émigré writer Josef Skvorecky begins his novel, *The Engineer of Human Souls* (1984), with an image of contrast between old world and new that could be seen as emblematic of that novel's hegira subtext. The fictional narrator--a Czech refugee from the events of 1968 and a professor, significantly enough, at "Edenvale College"-- looks out of his window onto a

⁵ For a version of this argument see, in addition to Atwood's well known chapter on "Immigrant Exile" in *Survival. A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature*, Halvard Dahlie, *Varieties of Exile: The Canadian Experience*. Clearly, Moodie's text is also significant for the way it encodes the ethnic hierarchy implicit in Canada's evolution as an outpost of British empire. See Carole Gerson, "Nobler Savages: Representations of Native Women in the Writings of Susanna Moodie and Catharine Parr Traill," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 32 2, 1997, 5-21 for an interesting discussion of the varied treatment of 'subordinate' groups in Moodie's writing.

Although my focus here is on fiction, it is interesting to note that the old world/new world dichotomy is very common in poetry by immigrant poets, from eighteenth-century Scots bards to contemporary poets. Representative is German-Canadian poet, Walter Bauer, who repeatedly juxtaposes the world-weary guilt of war-torn Europe with the comparative *tabula rasa* of Canada's northern landscape, noting that, "The sun here must be a different sun from the one under which I used to live." See Walter Bauer, *A Different Sun*. 10.

"cold Canadian wind (that) blends two whitenesses: snowflakes and snowdust", swirling them around a campus that stands "in a wilderness"(Skvorecky 4). Creating variations on this image of innocence, he weaves a complex pattern on a variety of self-reflexive literary frames, in combination with the contrasting image of the old world as a dark labyrinth, as well as the fondly remembered country of one's youth. The narrator explains--in the polite but distanced tone of the outsider--what he likes about this "country of cities with no past" and finds the Toronto skyline "... more beautiful ... than the familiar silhouette of Prague Castle":

"There is beauty everywhere on earth, but there is greater beauty in those places where one feels that sense of ease which comes from no longer having to put off one's dreams until some improbable future--a future inexorably shrinking away; where the fear which has pervaded one's life suddenly vanishes because there is nothing to be afraid of. Gone are the fears I shared with my fellows, for although the Party exists here, it has no power as yet. And my personal fears are gone too, for no professional literary critics in Canada will confine me in arbitrary scales of greatness" (4).

Similar snow swept Canadian versions of the new world as Eden, a place where dreams come true, appear in various guises in insider fictions of immigrant and/or ethnic experience in Canada; but, in noting the contrast between old and new world landscapes, writers very often juxtapose this image with negative or ambivalent ones, thereby undermining an edenic version of the new world.

For example, in her novel *The Lion's Mouth* (1983), Italian-Canadian writer Caterina Edwards has her narrator, a young woman who emigrated as a child from Venice to the Canadian prairies, recollect her first impression of the Canadian landscape. She represents that landscape in terms of "emptiness, ghostlessness... hostility... the cruelty of the straight line"

(Edwards 75). *The Lion's Mouth* provides a striking example of the significance of the old world/new world polarity, since it is the metaphor that structures the entire novel. Reminiscent of Bauer's use of the sun trope in the poems throughout *A Different Sun* is Edwards' use of light to suggest the striking contrast between the nuanced, sensuous complexity of Venice and the stark frontier clarity of Calgary and Edmonton. Writing to her friend in Venice, the narrator wants to make him aware of this antithesis:

The piercing light of the low midday sun pours through the two high windows, lays stripes of blinding brightness across carpets, the walls, the desk, and the pile of ink-covered papers. I wish I could make you see this book-stuffed room where I sit and write. Make you know me as I know you: know your study, the drafting tables, the discreet bed-sofa, the ordered shelves; ...know your light: never this direct, cheerful shine but always a reflection flickering up from the canal, a watery, shifting glow that plays over the pictures, the fading gold and brown ceiling frescoes...(46).

Continuing to highlight the old/new contrast as the plot unfolds, Edwards' narrator tells her friend that the early draft of her novel "illuminates the depth of the shock my family's emigration from Venice to Canada caused. For my life was split into two seemingly inimical halves..." (76). Ultimately, however, the sharp contrast between old and new worlds softens as both worlds becomes increasingly complex and increasingly ambiguous through Edwards' accumulation of greater and greater detail, which works to subvert the binary discourse out of which the novel itself and the experiences of its characters have been constructed.

Edwards' careful, self-reflexive blending of form and content in *The Lion's Mouth* allows the reader to see with particular clarity the function served by such images of contrast between old and new, which are repeatedly evoked in ethnic minority fiction. First, they concretize dislocation, the

feeling of having been cut in half, of living in two incongruous, even incompatible worlds. Second, they point the reader (along with the dislocated fictional characters), toward the transformations required in the fictions to bridge, perhaps even to blend, two very different cultural spaces. Such binary images of contrast inform the work of Italian-Canadian writers C.D. Minni and Frank Paci. For example, in his story "Roots," Minni juxtaposes picture-postcard images of lush Italian gardens with raw, windswept images of Canada's westernmost shore, using them as emblems of his main character's duality: the internal discrepancy he feels between "the boy" of his Italian youth and "the man" of his Canadian adulthood (Minni 67-74).⁶

The novels of Italian-Canadian writer Frank Paci are likewise built around images of contrast between the old and new worlds; for example, in *The Father*, the old world is projected in the father himself: Oreste, an old-world craftsman whose lovingly-baked bread symbolizes the communal and spiritual values of the old-world village. Oreste's lost world contrasts sharply with the new, the defining materialism and instrumentalism of the latter symbolized by machine-made bread and urban renewal. In *The Father* (1984) and in his earlier novel, *Black Madonna* (1982), both set in Sault Ste Marie in the 1950's and 1960's, Paci represents the completeness of the immigrant generation's dislocation through contrasting images of old and new worlds, including images of violent death and dismemberment.

⁶ The use of contrasting images of old and new worlds to encode troubled identity is also apparent in the poetry of Mary diMichele, as for example, in "Enigmatico". Here, the poet also links the male/female polarity to that of old world/new world; this adds a further layer of complexity to the confusion the poem's narrator expresses through various overlapping/conflicting images of herself.

In the latter novel, the primary symbol of the old world is the black madonna herself, Assunta Barone, whose inability to adapt is represented through her violent death (she is literally cut in half when she is struck by a train). The new world is symbolized negatively in the steel plant that looms darkly over the fading West End Italian neighbourhood, more positively in the seeming endless expanse of smooth white ice (a kind of *tabula rasa*) over which Assunta's son Joey skates in his dreams. Such images of old and new worlds, made ambiguous by their close juxtaposition, recur throughout Paci's fiction, as in his short story, "The Stone Garden." The garden of the title is beautiful, but largely inaccessible to the second-generation boys who attempt to steal the lush fruit within its walls.

In addition to evoking personal dislocation and confused identity, this basic dichotomy between old and new generates three inter-related binaries: paradise/inferno; inferiority/superiority and exile/integration. The tension inherent in these polarities highlights a more general communal dislocation that is at least as extreme as the personal one embodied in the recurring immigrant character (such as Paci's Assunta Barone in *The Black Madonna* or Oreste Mancuso in *The Father*; John Marlyn's Uncle Janos in *Under the Ribs of Death* (1957); Rudy Wiebe's Jacob Wiens in *Peace Shall Destroy Many* (1962), to name but a few), who cannot adjust. A focus on community experience is apparent, for example, in Kiriak's depiction of the spiritual struggle that the entire group of Ukrainian settlers undergoes in *Sons of the Soil* (1959); in Marlyn's depiction of the "scabrous" and "decaying" buildings that seem to symbolize the general malaise of Winnipeg's North End; in Richler's depiction of spiritual failure—personal, familial, communal—in, for example, *Son of a Smaller Hero* (1955) and in *The Apprenticeship of Duddy*

Kravitz (1959); in Paci's depiction of family breakdown and urban decay in his fictions of Italian immigrant experience; in Kogawa's complex portrayal of communal victimization, and communal failure and loss in *Obasan* (1981); in M.G. Vassanji's depiction of Asian-African immigrants in *No New Land* (1991), whose Don Mills highrise apartment community (the product of a murky mix of free choices and imposed limits) hovers between confining and enabling its members.

In these and many other fictions of ethnic minority experience in Canada, the difficulty of adaptation for entire communities, as well as for individuals, is depicted through binary patterns. And the old world/new world binary is very often central to representing these kinds of dislocation. Again and again, fictional representation becomes a vehicle for defining "Here" and "There." The distances between the two physical, psychological, and cultural spaces are constructed through binary patterns, which provide the bases for character delineation and interaction, and even permeate the fictional text through bilingual diction and imagery.⁷ In these patterns one can read ambivalence: is paradise in the old world or the new, the golden past, or the bright future? The fictional "answer" to this question is often equivocal. At times the immigrant experience evoked is one of bitter exile, at other times one of fulfillment--albeit perhaps delayed for several generations.

Ethnic minority fictions characteristically express doubts about Canada as a potential paradise, and at least temporarily privilege the old country and the past over the new country and the future. The latter is often symbolized by images of an inhospitable Canadian landscape, of the United States and/or of

⁷ See Cyril Dabydeen's introduction to his anthology of Caribbean writing in Canada, *A Shapely Fire: Changing the Literary Landscape* for a discussion of the old world/new world polarity vis-a-vis Caribbean-Canadian writers. Arun Mukherjee also develops this idea in "South Asian Poetry in Canada: In Search of a Place."

technology. For example, in texts that represent experience in western Canada, particularly those depicting prairie settlement, images of the new-world as fearful, foreboding, overpowering, are common, as they are more generally in early-to-mid-twentieth century Canadian prairie literature. Images of an endless, seemingly empty landscape, as well as of impenetrable mountains or bush seem to mirror the isolation and loneliness of the characters. Typical are the reactions of the characters in Illia Kiriak's saga of Ukrainian pioneer settlement, *Sons of the Soil* (1959) who find that the new-world falls far short of their images of paradise: "We thought we were to live like lords," they mutter among themselves, "and now it seems we'll be dressed in nothing but the prairie air and eat nothing but the bark of trees" (Kiriak 19). Later, another of Kiriak's characters compares the new world unfavourably with the old, noting that "The forests over there were the real thing; not wretched bush like those we have here" (Kiriak 104).

Despite negative imaging of the new world in their early chapters, agrarian fictions of ethnicity, structured as pioneer sagas, often present the new world as a place where pain and struggle are rewarded, e.g., *The Viking Heart* (1923); *Sons of the Soil* (1959). Literature dealing with urban experience often paints a less sanguine picture. In Frank Paci's fictional evocations of Italian-Canadian immigrant experience, the immigrant ghetto, a re-created Italian village, is on the positive side of the paradise/inferno polarity. Though an imperfect garden, when juxtaposed against both a sterile Canadian culture, projected through a variety of images of passivity and hyper-rationality, and a threatening American technology, symbolized by the International Bridge being built through Paci's fictional Sault St. Marie, the ghetto embodies all that is warm, communal, human. Unfortunately,

this little piece of the old world, and the first-generation immigrants who inhabit it, are fighting a losing battle against the encroachment of cold steel. The destructive power of technology is also symbolized by the steel plant; ironically, it provides the immigrant characters a livelihood while robbing them of their full humanity.⁸ Like Oreste Mancuso, the village baker in *The Father*, Adamo, the father in *Black Madonna* is an old world craftsman--a brick-layer. He tells his son, Joey, that bricklaying is honourable, useful work. "But not in the plant, Joey. That's no place for a real bricklayer" (62). Instead of building a cathedral (as he might have done in the past as an old-world craftsman) or even building homes for his neighbours, he makes bricks to line the plant's furnace, thereby "keeping the inferno going" (62).

A similar image of the new world as inferno occurs in Henry Kreisel's *The Rich Man*. The main character, Jacob Grossman, a Jewish immigrant, works as a presser in the "hottest part" of a clothing factory, daily assaulted by "the steady vibrating hum of whirring... machines..." and the "...stale smell of cloth mingled with the steam of the Hoffman presses and the sweat of hundreds of workers"(Kreisel, *The Rich Man* 15). Similarly, for the displaced immigrant characters in the novels and short stories of Caribbean-Canadian writer, Austin Clarke, the new-world inferno is, paradoxically, the icy social

⁸ Interestingly, in *Culture and Imperialism*, Said, discussing the poetry of Yeats, argues that the championing of the lost or subjugated past as an embodiment of a superior more humane and spiritual world in relation to the materialistic world of the colonizer is a characteristic and powerfully subversive feature of resistance culture: "In a world from which the harsh strains of capitalism have removed thought and reflection, a poet who can stimulate a sense of the eternal and of death into consciousness is the true rebel, a figure whose colonial diminishments spur him to a negative apprehension of his society and of 'civilized' modernity" (228). This motif is particularly strong in all of Paci's work, and it appears in that of a number of the other writers discussed in this thesis.

and economic landscape they encounter in a fictionalized Toronto, with its fatal blend of uncaring anonymity and racism.⁹

Overall, however, ambivalence about the location of paradise is largely unresolved, either in particular fictions, or in ethnic minority fiction generally, viewed as a collective project. However, the inevitability of change and the need for everyone involved to adapt is repeatedly foregrounded, most often with a sad and nostalgic tone by immigrant writers, with a bitter and confused one by those of subsequent generations. That adaptation exacts a price is a common theme in the texts produced by both. For immigrant writers, that price is generally envisioned as perpetual loneliness and loss of what might have been. One reads this in the straightforward lines of a Ukrainian-Canadian folk song, ("And Canada is a foreign country/And the people are not one's own/There is no truth to be had from anyone/And there won't be ...in the future") as well as in the sophisticated lines of Post-World War II emigre poets such as George Bauer and George Faludy. The latter, as for example in his "Sonnet 90," laments having lost his rightful place in Hungarian literary history:

And who could be more happy than we are?
Only from time to time do I grow sad that my gravestone
will not honour me beside Kosztolanyi, Karinthy, and
every poet I loved so much. I carry my urn in my head.
Where else could I carry it?" (Faludy, 56)

In the work of subsequent-generation writers, the price is generally confused identity, marginality in both worlds. In re-mythologizing the second-generation character out of this impasse, ethnic minority fictions often evoke symbolic rites of passage, including sacrifice in the form of death,

⁹ See, for example, Clarke's story, ironically entitled "Canadian Experience" in his collection of short stories, *Nine Men Who Laughed*, in which Toronto is depicted through a series of interconnected images of death.

as in *Sons of the Soil* and *The Viking Heart*, or insanity, as in Vanderhaeghe's "What I Learned from Caesar" and Hugh Cook's "Homesickness." Again and again, these fictions depict sacrifice as necessary, inevitable. This occurs in prairie novels such as Kiriak's *Sons of the Soil* (1959), Vera Lysenko's *Yellow Boots* (1954) Laura Goodman Salverson's *The Viking Heart* (1925) and Barbara Sapergia's *The Foreigners* (1983); it also occurs in urban fictions, such as Morley Callaghan's "Last Spring They Came Over," or Brian Moore's *The Luck of Ginger Coffey* (1960), in all three of Frank Paci's novels depicting Italian immigrants, in Austin Clark's stories, such as "Canadian Experience," in Joy Kogawa's *Obasan* (1982), in Katherine Alexander's *Children of Byzantium* (1987).

Not surprisingly, marriage is another recurring rite of passage from old world to new. Though it is often depicted as potentially destructive of an ethnic group's solidarity and traditions, intermarriage, particularly between an ethnic minority character and an Anglo-Canadian, is often the price for successfully establishing oneself in the new world, a kind of resolution, albeit tension-laden, of the problems of "Otherness"--a fulfillment of the outsider's desire for acceptance. Occasionally, the rite of passage from otherness to acceptance is education, a process endowed with almost magical transformative power in Charlie Jang's *The Tears of Chinese Immigrants* (1959, 1990) and in Magdalena Eggleston's *Mountain Shadows* (1955), a novel whose main character is the daughter of Lithuanian immigrants growing up in the small coal-mining communities of the Crows Nest Pass.

Less frequent, but intriguing, is the use of a new, synthetic art form as a rite of passage and, at the same time, as a strategy of resistance. Such is the case in Vera Lysenko's *Yellow Boots* in which the main character, Lilli Landash, daughter of Ukrainian immigrants, not only marries outside her

group to an immigrant character who is more assimilated and "acceptable" than she, but also becomes an artist who can synthesize the diverse cultural memories of the polyglot prairie society in which she lives. A singer "whose art (is) the art of the people" (354), Lilli can wear the yellow boots and sing the songs that symbolize her very particular Ukrainian peasant traditions, but in a new language and in a way that is appealing to a diverse "Canadian" audience:

As the big, passionate voice burst upon the audience, they felt as though they stood in the presence of the first folk poet who sang of human things; and the song emerged with great strength and nobility... .

'Remember?' That was a common word as the immigrants turned to each other, faces full of wonder at hearing a dance, a prayer, a lullaby, some precious incident of childhood revived. 'Rosita--thus we were in childhood--remember?' The exile felt once more the memories woven into the fabric of his childhood. These memories tugged at his heart, they appeared as far-off glimpses of a country once beloved and long since deserted... .

Aroused by this re-creation of their own vanished past, the people in the audience knew that this artist had sprung from them, and that her art was the art of the people. They acclaimed in many languages, as they stood up and cheered, shouted, stamped, 'She is ours! She is ours!' (354)

One can read Lysenko's evocation of compatibility between 'difference' and 'unity' in the context of Said's "three great topics...in decolonizing cultural resistance": a holistic vision of community history; an alternative vision to human history; and "...a noticeable pull away from separatist nationalism toward a more integrative view of human community and human liberation" (Culture 215, 216). Interestingly, *Yellow Boots* encompasses all of these impulses, along with a proto-feminist agenda.

But perhaps the most common rite of passage depicted in ethnic minority fiction is that of achieving material success. Intimately bound up with the mythology of the new world as promised land, achieving material

success is, for many immigrant and/ethnic characters, an almost Calvinistic talisman of worthiness, a vindication of the decision to leave the old world, a badge of final arrival and acceptance. The success/failure binary is of particular interest to second-generation writers; consequently, I will discuss it more fully in Chapter Two.

One other vehicle for mediating the tensions between the various polarities inherent in immigrant experience is the act of fictionalizing itself. With varying degrees of self reflexivity, many writers who represent immigrant and/or ethnic experiences in Canada posit the mediating power of storytelling in the dialectic between old and new, as well as its synthesizing and transformative powers, for individuals, for families, for communities. Again, this idea seems to be of particular interest to second-generation writers, so it too will be explored more fully in Chapter Two.

The Journey from Old World to New

Any discussion of the old world/new world binary would be glaringly incomplete if it did not explore the ways in which fiction about immigrant and ethnic experience uses the fundamental motif of the journey, first to highlight the contrasts discussed above, that is, to emphasize the great distances (both literal and figurative) between old world and new that are portrayed in the fiction I analyze; and second, to highlight the nature of the process of bridging, finding a place, which is, I argue, the subtext of the journey topos as portrayed by ethnic minority writers. That is, the journey becomes, as Said suggests, a site of struggle (Culture 214), a vehicle for representing the processes of domination and the strategies of resistance.

Fiction that portrays immigrant and/or ethnic experience links several interrelated categories of experience: historical and imaginary

(fictional, mythological); personal and communal. More precisely, it is a site where these categories intersect, and the journey motif is a particular site of that intersection: a vehicle for representing a very real and multifaceted journey (viewed either as a series of collective "waves," or as an enormous number of individual acts) for those displaced by migration. Exploring this site suggests that although there are in a sense as many different kinds of immigrant journeys as there have been individuals who have made them, at another level, these various journeys converge into one. The fictional journey becomes a prototype of the processes of transformation connected with migration; as such, it constitutes a strategy for claiming space in a new world that has already been defined by imperial cartography. A voyage both away from and toward home, it is evoked in three segments, each of which the immigrant traveler seems obliged to pass through and each of which holds a lesson that the traveler must learn. Further, it is a journey that may take much longer than the traveler anticipates.

In order to clarify the three stages of this journey, I focus my discussion on three kinds of immigrant journeys that are recurrently portrayed. While one of these is quite often the primary focus of a particular fiction, all three can be seen to constitute, as variously interwoven strands, a basic element in the binary structural pattern underlying ethnic minority fiction. These include what I have called reluctant journeys, vertical journeys and return journeys.¹⁰ The first is

¹⁰ For an analysis of the significance of the return journey in Italian-Canadian fiction, see Joseph Pivato, "The Return Journey in Italian-Canadian Literature." Pivato's analysis suggests the return journey's significance in the resistance activity of re-creating one's identity (both individual and communal) through insisting on discovering/telling one's *whole* history, not just one's limit/ed/ing history as a member of an undervalued immigrant group in Canada, or, as Said puts it, of inscribing "a holistic vision of community history; an alternative vision to human history" as a means to resisting the forces of dominance.

a journey motivated not by any strong desire to leave the old world, but by the force of circumstances; the second is a product of the immigrant's struggle to find a place for himself/herself within the complex stratification of Canadian society, as delineated, for example, by John Porter in *The Vertical Mosaic* ; the third is a journey "backward" to re-touch or re-discover "the old country," either literally or in some symbolic form. What follows, then, is a brief discussion of each of these three types of journeys, and of the ways in which they intertwine to constitute a strategy of resistance.

Not surprisingly, images of transit(ion) abound in fiction dealing with immigrant experience. Trunks, suitcases, boats, trains, airplanes, postcards--these and various other paraphernalia of the traveler--appear again and again, metonyms for the immigrant's marginal and transitional position. "Details from the Canadian Mosaic," a short story by C.D. Minni, begins with the main character, a young Italian village boy whose family has decided to emigrate, dreaming "of baggage piled in the street, green trunks and bulging suitcases fastened with rope" of the "bus to Naples...of a ship...and of ...new words, passports emigration, disembarkation." Finally, his dream merges into a memory of being "on a train rattling across frozen prairies where snow drifted, and he was celebrating his ninth birthday with his parents in the restaurant car" (*Other Selves* 51).

Similarly, a central image in Rohinton Mistry's story about a Parsi immigrant from Bombay, "Lend Me Your Light," is the airplane. The image appears first in the form of a toy model, symbol of the western lifestyle to which the young narrator's upwardly mobile Indian family aspires, later in the form of the plane the narrator, as a young

man, eventually boards to take him to affluent North America, and still later as the principle topic of conversation among the "jet set" Indian immigrants he meets at dinner parties in Toronto:

These were the people who knew all about the different airlines that flew to Bombay; they were the virtuosi of transatlantic travel. If someone inquired of the most recent traveler, 'How was your trip to India?' another would be ready to ask, 'What airline did you fly?' Once this favourite topic was introduced, the evening would resemble a convention of travel agents expounding on the salient features of their preferred airlines."

In Mistry's story, as well as in others that employ similar icons of the journey, the transitional space thus metonymized is a contemporary limbo, a representation of anxiety and ambivalence, replete with coexisting promises of heaven and/or hell on either side, and inescapable whispers about the impossibility of exit. For example, in "My Luggage" by German-Canadian poet, Walter Bauer, the narrator notes sardonically, "Now that I've arrived/ ...in Canada/I'll make a laughing-stock of the customs officers/ And tell you what I took along,/ What I found most burdensome to carry:/ My desperate love for Europe"(Bauer 15).

But whether or not their transit(ional), limbo state is represented by an icon of journeying, many characters in immigrant fiction make the initial voyage reluctantly, and, after arriving in Canada, remain permanently dislocated. Typical is Sarah, the spiritually exhausted mother of a Jewish-immigrant family portrayed by Adele Wiseman in *The Sacrifice* (1956). Sarah and her family have come to Canada fleeing pogroms in Russia in which two of their sons were killed. Once here, she finds that "Her life had become like a long conversation in which she had somehow said all that she had to say" (133), and she gradually

"fades away" into death. Similarly, in Rudy Wiebe's *Peace Shall Destroy Many*, David Wiens, the immigrant father of the novel's protagonist, finds that "For him the Canadian bush disrupted the whole order of things....He felt as if the foundation of all morality was sliced from beneath him" (121).

We meet this character again in Bharati Mukherjee's short story, "The Father," which portrays a middle-aged Hindu couple from Ranchi, now living in a quintessential North American suburb. Mukherjee's portrayal contrasts sharply the reluctant, ambivalent adaptation of the incurably mystic Mr. Bhowmick (who prays daily to the Hindu goddess Kali Mata), with the intensely enthusiastic integration of his outspokenly agnostic and thoroughly modern wife. Mrs. Bhowmick wears slacks purchased at K Mart, has a job outside the home, and insists on cooking American food using recipes she faithfully gleans from the latest women's' magazines. Clearly, Mr. Bhowmick is not happy with their situation. "It was his wife that he blamed. Coming to America to live had been his wife's idea." (67). Interestingly, Mrs. Bhowmick threatens to hide her husband's hand-carved goddess: "There'd be no peace in the house until she hid Kali-Mata in a suitcase"(60). That the goddess is female is significant since the loss Mr. Bhowmick mourns in the New World seems to be of some deeply female quality associated with the India of his past, and which he finds almost totally lacking in his rational, sterile surroundings and in his very assimilated wife and daughter. The latter, an engineer,

...could never comfort him. She wasn't womanly or tender the way that unmarried girls had been in the wistful days of his adolescence. She could sing Hindi film songs, mimicking exactly the high, artificial voice of Lata Mungeshkar, and she had

taken two years of dance lessons at Soon Devi's Dance Academy in Southfield, but these accomplishments didn't add up to real femininity. Not the kind that had given him palpitations in Ranchi" (63).

But it is perhaps in Frank Paci's evocations of the transplanted Italian village in Sault Ste Marie that the character of the reluctant, displaced traveler is most fully developed. Oreste Mancuso in Paci's *The Father*, and Assunta Barone in his *Black Madonna* are virtually iconic representations of the old-world villages they each felt forced to leave, in Oreste's case, to keep his family, in Assunta's, to have one. Reflecting on the distance the elder Mancuso had come, Stefano Mancuso remembers that his father and his friends had often told him that it was the First World War that had changed their world and forced them to emigrate. "Their voices swelled, their eyes became moist, as they summoned up their memories. If it hadn't been for the War, they both said. The War, the War. That's what ruined everything. That's what made them fall from grace" (*The Father* 124).

Past prime marriageable age, Assunta in *Black Madonna* came to Canada as a mail-order bride, seeing it as her last chance to become what she so wanted to be--a wife and a mother. As her parish priest, Father Sarlo put it in the heartfelt eulogy he gives at her funeral: "If there was one thing she wanted in all the world, she said, it was to have children. To make her life worthwhile...She would have crossed all the oceans in the world for that" (185). Assunta's daughter, Maria/Marie, fascinated from childhood with the dowry trunk her mother brought with her, gazes at the trunk and remembers her Mother's stories of its significance and of her journey:

Assunta called it a *buvalo* in dialect....it

contained her only possessions when she crossed the ocean (10)....How her own mother had given the chest to her before she left her village. That it wasn't to be opened till she was actually married in the new country. How she had traveled by train across Italy to Naples, and then boarded a boat and landed in Halifax--journeying all the while with the key safely hanging from her neck chain beside *Gesu Cristo*. How that fact more than any other had sustained her throughout the harrowing journey. All those different people. The outside world so...scary because she had never been very far outside her village before that. And she wouldn't go so far again" (38).

Although she has two children, Maria and Joey, Assunta finds that her new-world dreams in many ways remain unrealized because of the gulf that develops between her and the children. The products of two different languages, two different cultures, two different worlds, the two generations become increasingly inscrutable to each other, and though as a child Maria is obsessed with opening the dowry trunk to discover its mysterious contents, it is not until after her mother's death that she is able to do so. Both children feel at times almost completely estranged from Assunta. "How could she be his mother...when he didn't even know her?", Joey wonders after being unable to make sense of what to him is her completely bizarre behaviour following his father's death. "...what did it all amount to if she was actually a stranger to him?...If she had lived in the same house with him for 30 years and she could still revert to barbaric customs he had no inkling of?"(39). For her part, Assunta always feels displaced. She learns no more than a few words of English, and when driven to tears in the heat of family quarrels, asks bitterly, "How can I have come here?...How? I was so content in Novilara... Just give me my passage money back. Let me go

back to where I came from" (94). After her husband's death she says to Joey:

"...your father, he sent for me when I was young. Now you can send me back when I am old. My own children have forsaken me. What reason is there to stay? I have never belonged here" (96).

Interestingly, as with Mukherjee's Mr. Bhowmick, the sense of displacement that haunts both of Paci's reluctant immigrants is rooted in the the loss of connectedness with larger (often female) forces, and with community.¹¹ Both Oreste and Assunta find in the West-End Italian neighbourhood a space between old and new worlds where, for a time, they can make a place for themselves. As Father Sarlo, himself a displaced village priest, puts it, "Coming to this country was like going to the ends of the earth for them. Like going to China....They needed this neighbourhood....It was the place in between China and the old world. Where they could make a place like home...a village where everyone could know each other..."(159). Oreste, the village baker in the old world, continues his trade in the new, depending on his generations-old recipes, his love for his work, and on his old-world, brick oven:

...the bakery was like a cave. There was a large hearth oven made of bricks on one side and a long counter on the other. Except for a small mixing machine, everything was done by hand. After he lit the oven...(he tells his son, Stefano) The oven is the most important part of the bakery...This is an old oven made of bricks. The stone inside is important for the taste. We make our bread just

¹¹ For an interesting analysis of the motif of searching for elemental female forces in *Black Madonna*, see Roberta Sciff-Zamaro, "Black Madonna: A Search for the Great Mother." It seems suggestive, if not highly revealing within a postcolonial framework that the repressed element, the colonized space, the lost world, is so often encoded as female.

like the Romans did thousands of years ago. People were making bread before they could write"(38).

But the West-End neighbourhood lives in the shadow of the giant steel bridge which links Sault St. Marie with the United States, and in the shadow of urban renewal. Oreste's northern Italian wife, educated, urbane, assimilated, pushes for a larger business operation. "We can build a larger, more modern bakery. One that's fully automated"(82). Although Oreste protests that he doesn't "...want machines to make my bread" (82), he eventually loses, and the old bakery is sold, the stone oven replaced by "...a huge machine...(that) could bake as many as 500 loaves at a time"(86). He finds no place for himself as the West End collapses around him.

Similarly, Assunta is eventually pushed out of the transplanted old-world village that has been her only home in Canada, not only by the death of her husband, but also by urban renewal. "The city had wanted to expropriate their house for a while now. The old industrial neighbourhood had been chipped away piece by piece" (15). Ultimately, Assunta's fears about journeying are realized. Like Oreste, she is destroyed by the technological forces outside the disappearing village; she is literally torn apart by the train that travels through an open field near her home. Remembering the horror of finding her mutilated body in the place where she had gone for many years to harvest dandelions, her son Joey muses that Assunta must have had to do "...a lot of dreaming to make these fields seem like the land she had never wanted to leave....unlike dandelions, people couldn't be uprooted....so easily (7).

Nor, it seems, can the family be easily transplanted, as we see in the struggles of the second generation. Oreste's and Assunta's reluctant

journeys end in their lonely, tragic deaths far from their spiritual homes. But their children, torn by divided loyalties that pull them away from their parents on the one hand, yet toward them on the other, must also struggle to find a place that nurtures them. While Maria regards her mother as an "Anachronism...Someone from the dark ages"(108), and sees the demise of the old neighbourhood as a cause for celebration, she is, nevertheless, inexorably drawn toward the dark, elemental earth with which her mother (and her Italian background) is so intimately connected in her psyche. Particularly after the birth of her child, Maria, who has changed her name to Marie, finds insufficient the world of mathematics, logic and Anglo-Canadian correctness into which she has escaped through her profession and her marriage to Richard, an Anglo-Canadian philosophy professor:

If Richard's work was pushing him higher into the sky, Michael's birth had brought her down, closer to the earth. She could feel her body wanting to unravel, open up, and break through in the moist dark earth that wanted to take things in and push them out renewed and engorged with life. But these dark feelings made her feel guilty and afraid. She had for too long wanted to be like Richard, de-rooted and in control of herself, so that she could escape the West End (152).

Similarly, Oreste's son, Stefano/Stephen, is torn between his love for his father and the earthy, old-world craftsmanship Oreste represents, and the pure rationality to which he aspires. He pursues a doctorate on Wittgenstein, a philosopher of language. His choice of subjects is significant, of course, since language is problematized by the immigrant journey, not only for the first generation, but also for the second. Assunta, forever displaced, is never able to learn English, though she watches obsessively the "talking pictures" on television in

hopes of mastering the language. Oreste, too, fails to master English, the language of power and business, and is overshadowed by his business-savvy wife, who becomes fluent in English.

Like other second-generation characters in immigrant fiction, their son, Stefano/Stephen searches for a space of his own and an appropriate lexicon of word and action. We can read his search as a post-colonial one; that is, his displacement, the result of migration, has "eroded" his "valid" sense of self, his "identifying relationship between self and place" (Maxwell et. al. 9). Language is the key to establishing this relationship, but the problem of finding a language that does not destroy Stefano in the interests of Stephen is formidable. This is so in large part because "the language of the centre," the same language that marginalizes the immigrant, constructing him as "other," must be both rejected and embraced by one "in search of discourse fully adapted" to one's new space, one's new, necessarily hybridic, identity. Stefano must both abrogate and appropriate English; he must "refuse the categories of the imperial culture," but also "take" the language, and make it "bear the burden" of his "own cultural experience"(38). Thus, Stephano's dilemma shares something in common with that Said points to as "...the predicament of sharing a language with the colonial overlord" (Culture 227). How does one resist the colonizer's dominance in the latter's own language? How does an Italian-Canadian "come to voice" in English? The novel chronicles Staphano's efforts toward this end and his eventual at least partial success.

The uncertainties connected with the first segment of the immigrant journey are the first generation's inevitable bequest, albeit in

modified form, to the second; the marginality--linguistic and otherwise--inherited by the immigrant's children can generate complex problems of identity, as well as a profound desire to keep moving. In short, the Reluctant Journey is closely related to the Vertical Journey, not only because the dream of success, and the upward movement that symbolizes it, is an integral "push" motivating the first-generation's voyage, both real and fictional, enthusiastically or reluctantly undertaken, but also because the initial immigrant journey sets in motion others that their fictionalized progeny must take.

Some immigrant characters, though reluctant, are nevertheless bent on making an upward journey. The third-generation narrator in Denise Chong's fiction/memoir about Chinese-Canadian experience, *The Concubine's Children* recounts her Grandfather's immigrant journey as one precipitated by the "...constant turmoil and instability " brought on by Sun Yet-sen's nationalist revolution:

Sun was arming his Kuomintang nationalists and fomenting revolution among rival warlords. Men like Grandfather didn't have the means to buy off warlords and keep roving bandits away. In his early thirties, he had to support one nearly grown daughter from his first wife (who had died), and a second wife--now titled Wife Number One--who had yet to produce children. His one hope of prosperity lay in going abroad (61).

A reluctant sojourner, Grandfather is nevertheless determined to improve the life of his family, and to that end he sends for a concubine to be his workmate in Canada. She is reluctant to come, since, with her exceptional good looks she might have been better off as a concubine in China. However, she is ultimately forced to do so, since "...in China girls did as they were told; it was that or suicide" (52).

Nothing short of byzantine is the complex family that grows from the combined efforts of grandfather's two wives, his trips back and forth between them, Canada's discriminatory legislation vis-a vis Chinese immigrants, political events in China, and attempts to educate some of the Canadian children in China. Ironically, it is the narrator's grandmother, the "concubine," whose work as a waitress is the key to the Chinese family's upward mobility. Although she occupies a niche somewhere near the bottom of Canada's "Vertical Mosaic," she is able to finance considerable affluence and respectability for the branch of the family in China:

...(Grandfather) needed Grandmother: only she could put rice on the table for his families in Canada and in China. He couldn't get work with the Depression on and the trade unions agitating against Chinese men taking jobs from whites. But Grandmother was much sought after as a waitress. Restaurant owners knew that male patrons found seductive the way she wired curls and chignons to her hair, stained her lips red, and pinned silk flowers at her neck (63).

Thus, while the family estate in China waxes large, and the family there feels deeply grateful to Grandfather, in Canada, hostility between him and Grandmother divides the family, and her seamy lifestyle is an embarrassment to her children. The third-generation narrator, recounting her mother's vagabond childhood, notes that "Mother, like checked baggage, waited for Grandmother to claim her in rooms shared with elderly couples or Grandmother's women friends"(67). But even for the Canadian family, the journey set in motion by their parent's reluctant voyage to Canada is depicted as ultimately being an upward one--materially and spiritually--though it takes many years for its direction to be clear.

Some fictional immigrants are determined that they, and not just their children, will journey upward to the top of the new world's "Gold mountain." The narrator's immigrant father in Guy Vanderhaeghe's short story, "What I learned from Caesar," is determined to succeed, and to that end, jettisons what he hopes are all traces of his old-world baggage:

He was a counterfeit North American who paid them the most obvious of compliments, imitation...He had left all that (his past) behind him. I don't even know the name of the town or the city where he was born or grew up. He always avoided my questions about his early life as if they dealt with a distasteful and criminal past that was best forgotten....My father often proudly spoke of himself as a self-made man, but his description was not the most accurate. He was a remade man (13, 14).

Unfortunately, George Vander Elst's efforts are doomed to failure; his eventual fall is a hard one that leaves his son, even many years later, picking up the pieces of his father's story in order to understand his own, and with virtually no place to return for answers.

Some immigrant fictions, such as Illia Kiriak's saga of Ukrainian pioneers in the West, *Sons of the Soil*, portray a journey whose direction is clearly and unambiguously upward from one generation to the next, at least for the main characters. The more common pattern, while clearly based on a sub-text of verticality, creates the cross-generational ambiguity we see in Vanderhaeghe's story. Lilli Landash, the second-generation protagonist in Vera Lysenko's *Yellow Boots* moves "upward" from the harsh pragmatism, almost tyranny, of her father's old-world, peasant values, to education and freedom in the city. However, the novel also laments the passing of centuries-old folk traditions destroyed by the unrelenting march of modernity and its de-

humanizing technologies. By making Lilli a new-world singer of old songs, Lysenko gives her the burden of resolving the puzzle of ambivalence at the heart of her tale of the immigrant journey. Does the combination of individualism, instrumentalism and materialism at the centre of the new world make it a worthy destination? Does the journey toward it take one up or down? Can anything of the old, for example the passion and artistry embodied in the hand-crafted yellow boots, be successfully melded with the new?¹²

This is clearly also the question at the centre of Paci's trilogy of immigrant experience: *The Italians*, *The Father*, and *Black Madonna*.¹³ The inability of most of their parents to journey any further than the West End generates yet another journey for their children-- a journey as far away from their parents, from their language, from their religion, from their ethnic neighbourhoods, as they can manage in a direction that to them, at least for a time, seems obviously upward. Since this idea (and the structures used to develop it) is so central a concern of second-generation writers, it is discussed more fully in Chapter Two.

That the vertical journey (whether its direction is really up or down) is an inescapable part of the fictional immigrant journey seems a clear "message" in this fiction, not only in second-generation portrayals of urban landscapes, but also in such diverse fictions by first-generation immigrants as Kiriak's celebratory *Sons of the Soil*, and Austin Clarke's cautionary short story, "Canadian Experience." In the former, a family

¹² For an insightful analysis of the ways Lysenko attempts to do this, see Beverly J. Rasporich, "Retelling Vera Lysenko," 38-52.

¹³ See William Boelhower, "Ethnic Trilogies: A Genealogical and Generational Poetics" for an interesting discussion of the significance of the trilogy vis a vis immigrant/ethnic literature and American literature. Boelhower points out that "most of the trilogy practitioners were immigrant or ethnic writers, and that their project 'is patterned on the spatial shift from Old World to New World and is naturally concerned with the attempt to establish a trajectory of continuity out of what might be called a catastrophic act of topological dislocation' (158).

saga of successful pioneering that ends with the ancient narrator, Herory Workun, surrounded by his children and grandchildren, surveying the waving fields of wheat that are the fruits of his many years of now richly-rewarded labour, the upward journey is the topos of the novel; in the latter, a "slice of life" portrayal of a Caribbean immigrant trying to find a job in Toronto, the direction of the journey is reversed. De-energized by a deadly combination of poverty, isolation, depression and culture shock, the protagonist of Clarke's story makes a last try at getting "a position" as a junior executive in a Bay Street bank, a job for which he is totally unqualified. Shaped around images of death and verticality, the story moves to its tragic conclusion as the protagonist journeys, surrounded by men in black suits, down the stairs from his tenement lodgings, through the urban valleys of shadow created by the city's thrusting skyscrapers, to the elevator which at first takes him up to the "deathly quiet" bank he is afraid to enter, and then down again "...to the bottom" (57); and finally to the subway station where he leaps downward into the path of an oncoming train.

Like the vertical journey, the return journey is typically portrayed, whether indirectly as in Clarke's story, or much more directly, as in Paci's novels, as an inescapable segment of the immigrant's voyage. But also like the vertical journey, it can be perilous. When to return, and why, seem to be important questions to ask. For example, in Paul Yee's story, "Prairie Widow," the main character, Gum May, emigrated to Canada to join her husband, Gordon, after the discriminatory Chinese Exclusion Act was at last rescinded in 1947. She is faced with a difficult decision when her husband dies and she is left in Wilding, Saskatchewan with two young sons to raise and

the cafe Gordon had established many years before. Isolated by language, the attitudes of the townspeople, and years of hard, long hours in the cafe's kitchen, she is at first drawn to the idea of returning to China, or of going to Vancouver, where relatives and a large Chinese community could provide something much closer to a "home" than could a small prairie town. However, her decision not to return, but to stay and face the challenges before her is a measure of her transformation into a strong and independent person who can cope with whatever she must and who insists on claiming her own space in the new world:

Yes, they were staying, Gum-may repeated as she turned on the kitchen light. An unusual sense of peace filled her now. Surely she had learned and suffered enough to survive whatever twists heaven might throw her. Surely her life was not meant to be a continual trek through the doors of strangers...She felt at once weary and energized;; too tired to pack her bags for another move, but more than ready to show everyone her determination to succeed. The pieces of life she had gathered along the road to Gum San (Gold Mountain) made best sense here (343).

While Gum May seems to have made the right choice about not returning, Jacob Grossman, the protagonist in *The Rich Man*, Henry Kreisel's novel of immigrant return, makes the return journey at the wrong time and for the wrong reasons. He is motivated by a desire, not just to see the Austrian relatives he left when he immigrated thirty three years before, but also to display his success for them. Of course, he has "succeeded" only very modestly: he has worked as a presser in a garment factory in Toronto for most of his years there, and lives in a lower-class neighborhood with his married daughter, though he has been able to put his son through medical school. However, he is able to revise this modest reality to fit a mythology that

requires the immigrant's triumphant return. He buys a new white suit, gifts, and once aboard the ship that carries him back, he purchases a disturbing modern painting, not because he appreciates it, but because it enhances his illusion that he is returning "a rich man."

With these symbols of success, Jacob is able to tell, wordlessly, the story that he wants his Austrian family to hear. However, his penchant for self-deception seems also to prevent him from perceiving clearly the danger signals in the Vienna to which he returns in the late 1930's. He has had sentimental dreams of returning to a city whose streets are filled with the music of Strauss waltzes; what he finds in the streets is music in quite a different tone--desperately played by unemployed musicians. He also encounters frightening anti-semitism in his nephews' playmates, and a sad clown whose disguise is a cover for political activities unacceptable to an increasingly sinister State.

Although Jacob's deception might have remained relatively harmless, it becomes cruel when it is uncovered in the dark hour of his family's need. A real rich man could have helped his suddenly widowed sister, and ultimately his whole deeply threatened Jewish family. But his wealth (both material and spiritual) is an illusion and he is forced to leave with the painful knowledge of his glaring deception and inadequacy. In portraying Jacob's return journey, Kreisel underscores the moral ambiguities in the relationship between old world and new, itself a complex product of the many journeys between them. In so doing, he suggests complicities and inadequacies that explode any simplistic notion of this dichotomy being simply that between good and evil, innocence and experience.

If Kreisel warns us of the dangers of returning, others, like Guy

Vanderhaeghe, warn us of the perils of not doing so. "The oldest story is the story of flight, the search for greener pastures. But the pastures we flee, no matter how brown and blighted--these travel with us; they can't be escaped"(11), warns the narrator of his short story, "What I Learned from Caesar." Indeed, Kreisel himself suggests the almost mystical inevitability, if not the benefit, of return in his short story, "Chassidic Song," a kind of magic realist version of "The Prodigal son."

On an airplane journey between Montreal and New York, Arnold Weiss, a lapsed Jew, just happens to find himself with a group of ultra-orthodox Chassidic Jews on their way to a special religious gathering. Finding himself sitting next to one of them, a "strange, totemic figure," Weiss strikes up a conversation, asking if they are on their way to a *farbrengen*. The word had risen unbidden to his lips, startling both him and Josef Shemtov, his Chassidic seat mate. The interaction that follows, in which Shemtov probes Weiss for information about his background, calling him to task for having left the Orthodoxy of his grandfather, constitutes a warning to Weiss of the importance of returning to his spiritual home, the faith for which so many have suffered. Irritated by Shemtov's grilling about whether he keeps the commandments or has married out of the faith, Weiss asks: "What right have you to ask these questions? Are you my conscience? Who appointed you?" (31).

For his part, Shemtov is convinced that he has been in some way appointed to speak for Weiss's grandfather. Thus inspired, he tells Weiss, the sophisticated, secular professor on his way to an academic

conference (on James Joyce, appropriately enough) about his experience in Poland during the war. He tells Weiss that though he wasn't orthodox then, his visit to Poland made him long for a chance to declare his faith openly and fervently. He goes on to tell the reluctant Weiss that he had a kind of conversion experience when he came in contact with a group of Chassids in Montreal: "...Then suddenly, the Presence entered into me, like a stream. I cried out. I sang. I sang, too. I had no reason to sing and yet I sang"(35).

With this story, and convinced that he had acted as a vehicle for returning to the faith of his grandfather one who had strayed too far, Shemtov leaves Weiss when their plane lands in New York. His last words, "'Remember your grandfather...He sang too" (35) reverberate in Weiss's mind, highlighting the inescapability of his origins, their continuing power to shape him, and his need to 'see his history whole' if he is to construct an authentic identity for himself in the new world.

The attraction of a return journey, albeit one that is very consciously chosen, is the subject of a number of other fictions, such as C.D. Minni's short story, "Roots." The narrator, Berto, who had immigrated from Italy to Canada as a boy, returns years later with his wife and children, to "...the Villa S--Looking for--what? Ghosts of myself? Of the boy?" (69, 70). As well as becoming re-acquainted with his boyhood self and the village, both with the ways it has changed and remained the same, he also has an imaginary meeting with the man he might have become had he not emigrated: "...a man of Villa--sunburned, strong, dominant"(74). This meeting is important, because it makes him understand that his life, "his roots" have been transplanted in

Canada. "Not bad," he thinks as he contemplates his Italian double.

"Not bad at all, but it is not me"(74).¹⁴

Thus, the return journey can serve the important function of allowing the immigrant to say good-bye to that other, "might-have-been" self whose haunting presence fragments him in Canada, until he can "see (his life) whole" by connecting past and present selves. One should note, however, the similar, but contrasting pattern in fictions in which not returning is important. For example, in Brian Moore's *The Luck of Ginger Coffey*, the down-on-his-luck, but ever-hopeful Irish immigrant, Ginger, chooses not to return in the face of failure, even though his wife has already packed their trunk. Nevertheless, he must confront his double, though in Canada. Ginger's double appears first in the guise of the incurable get-rich-quick, self-improvement junkie, Warren K. Wilson, Ginger's roommate at the YMCA. Surrounded by piles of do-it-yourself courses in t.v. repair, magazine photography, private detecting, and other "boyish schemes" though he was "no longer a boy," Wilson brags to Ginger that despite his apparent skinniness, he "(B)uilt (himself) up from a runt to a Mr. Junior Honourable Mention" and that he's just on the verge of something important (II).

As well as meeting himself in this pathetic (but resourceful) "eternal boy," Ginger later meets the man he might become in "Old Billy," an aged Irish immigrant whose search for the streets paved with gold eventually led him to a dead-end job as a proofreader, and a run-

¹⁴ One is reminded by these encounters with ghosts and doubles that seem to be an important object of the return journey, of Eli Mandel's linking of ethnic writing with ghost stories: "...stories of identity, though presented as social analyses and political propaganda, are ghost stories or forms haunting our restless imagination" ("Ethnic Voice" 61).

down single room, where he is ending his days, sick and alone. The insight Ginger gains by the end of the novel is at least partially dependent on the holistic perspective on the immigrant journey and on the consequences of taking certain routes into North America afforded by these encounters which, in other fictions, are part of the return journey. In *The Luck of Ginger Coffey* they are an important part of what makes it possible for Ginger not to return to the stifling old-world situation he has fled, and yet to find a redemptive place for himself in the new, even though his journey within the "vertical mosaic" may not be noticeably upward.¹⁵

More often, however, illumination is inseparable from the return journey. In Denise Chong's "The Concubine's Children," the third-generation narrator notes that when she talked her mother, Hing, into joining her for the return journey, "...the reverberations from the collision of the two worlds shook dust from mirrors" (60). The greater clarity implied by the image of dust-free mirrors is a product of Hing's meeting her father's Chinese family, (her own family's double), which by the late 1980's consisted of her half- brother Yuen, whose feet, we are told at the story's outset, "turned backward at the ankles", which made it difficult to tell whether "...he was going down...(or) up", and a sister,

¹⁵ Including Moore's representation of an Irish immigrant's experience in my corpus of texts representing "other" ethnic experience, as I have defined it in the "Introduction" might seem problematic. However, including it can be justified on the grounds that in a very real way, the Irish in Canada have been "ethnic" in the sense of their having been regarded as "other" by many English Canadians. For example, Susanna Moodie's *Roughing it in the Bush*, a pattern-setting text, articulates anti Irish sentiment, making it one of the earliest forms of ethnic bias in English-Canadian literature. The "genteel colonialism" Carl Klink (1976) identifies as the characteristic subtext of English-Canadian literature in the nineteenth century (and beyond) included a view of the Irish as occupying a peripheral position in the imperial schema. As well, a number of postcolonial analysts refer to Ireland as a classic example of a colonized space. For example, Edward Said posits Y.B. Yeats and James Joyce as post-colonial writers who struggled to abrogate and appropriate the colonizer's language as part of a larger strategy of de-colonization (Culture 220-38).

Ping, now both quite impoverished. Meeting them enables her to throw off the bitterness she had felt for all that she had missed and suffered growing up as a poor and neglected child in Canada:

From Ping and Yuen, she was to find out that Grandmother's money and Grandfather's love had actually been siphoned away from her to the family in China. But the discovery didn't make her bitter; instead, it lifted the burden of her shame. Over the years--through war and revolution in China, and the growing acceptance in Canada that Orientals could be Canadians too--events had evened the score between Grandfather's two families. Mother's parents...had endowed her with the gift of life in Canada. That realization finally turned Mother's shame to gratitude and made her own life at last all of one piece (61).

When she departs to return home to Canada, her bitterness softened by new insight into how much she and her children have ultimately benefited from her parents' long-ago journey, Hing leaves the Chinese family with their versions of Grandfather and Grandmother intact, and both families, herself included, with "...the threads of Grandfather's hopes...still woven in his children's dreams" (78).

Likewise, in Paci's fiction, the return journey is crucial, not only to healing the fragmented identities of the second-generation characters, but also to effecting a reconciliation between the children and their immigrant parents, even though the latter are no longer alive. In *The Father*, Stefano's transformation from a fragmented, overly cerebral person, cut off from his past and from his emotions, to a person who is becoming whole, who has considerable self-insight, is effected by his return, not to Italy, but to the West End and to his father's old bakery. Here he conducts a quasi-religious rite of healing by baking bread with

his hands, as his father had taught him. This ceremony, like the religious one it is modeled upon, both effects and symbolizes a transformation: Stefano/Stephen has bridged the gap in his heretofore bifurcated identity via a language of word and gesture that he has made his own. Similarly, after Maria has acknowledged and understood her connection with her now-dead mother, which, again, is symbolized in a mystical rite in which she opens Assunta's trunk, dons her dress, and feels her presence as she looks at own reflection in the mirror, Maria plans her return journey to Italy:

She could take Michael and let them see that Assunta's side of the tree hadn't completely withered. She could go back for her mother--make the return journey that Assunta had always wanted to make (187).

Thus, typically, in fiction about immigrant and/or ethnic experience, the long immigrant journey away from and yet toward home is only completed when the inherent challenge of each part of the voyage has been grasped and at least partially met by a major character (s). The challenge of disorientation and suspension--displacement--that is at the centre of the first part of the voyage must be met by learning how to integrate elements from two different worlds into a new synthesis, one that can create a new space. The related challenge of the second part of the journey, how to make a place for oneself in the new world, one that affords an appropriate blend of spiritual and material nourishment, must be met by learning to separate reality from illusion, which means seeing through (deconstructing) the materialistic ethos of North America. Intertwined with the first two, the challenge of the third part of the journey--how to weave the various strands of the immigrant's history, both personal and collective, into a story that

links generations, providing the sustenance and continuity that are required for constructing a solid sense of self in relation to place, must be met by gaining a perspective that, paradoxically, allows both an absorption of and a distancing from the past. Together, these three processes--which are remarkably similar to Said's "three great topics in decolonizing cultural resistance" provide the vision and momentum required to "re-write myths" and thus to explode "manichean dualisms."

Overall, then, the fictional pattern I have described provides the framework for a cautionary tale as well as a metonym for displacement between two worlds. The tale tells readers that a voyage from old to new is likely to be more difficult, more dangerous and much longer than they had imagined, and that its consequences may be impossible to calculate, not only for immigrants, but for those who receive them and follow them. While warning of dangers, it ultimately cautiously validates the immigrant journey and suggests a way out of the constrictions imposed by the old world/new world binary; in so doing, it constructs Canada, if not as a material or spiritual utopia, at least as a site where post-colonial transformations can be imagined.

CHAPTER TWO

Shaping Apology: Voices of the Second and Third Generations

In observing that texts produced by "the ethnic voice" in Canada constitute "literature existing at an interface of two cultures, a form concerned with defining itself, its voice, the dialectic of self and other and the duplicities of self creation, transformation and identities" Eli Mandel (65) captures the general features of "insider" fiction about immigrant and ethnic experience; however, he also suggests the particularly important role played by the immigrants' children and grandchildren in the dialectical processes he highlights, both as historical actors and as fictional creations. If, as I argue throughout this thesis, the fictions of immigrant and ethnic experience in Canada have been sites of resistance, and have worked as mediums of intercultural adjustment and adaptation, that this is so is due in no small measure to the nature of the particular positions occupied by the second and third generations (Boelhower, *Ethnic Trilogies* 159).

Inevitably mediators, they stand on the border(s) between the old world and the new. Indeed, one could argue that the very delineation of generations which determines their exact position in relation to these places is itself fundamental to the way the immigrant narrative has been constructed, both in "real" life and in fiction. The notion that immigrant experience is bound up in distinctive generational sensibilities is widely accepted, even taken for granted. This is apparent in the scholarly literature on immigration and ethnicity, in the self descriptions of immigrants and their progeny, in the language of everyday conversation, as well as in fiction about immigrant and ethnic experience.

Analysing ethnicity and American literature, Werner Sollors argues that the unquestioned pervasiveness of the generational schema is the result of its particular usefulness in the American setting, where the founding story (i.e. that of the American Revolution) is one of child/parent separation, and where the continuing importance of immigration and mobility have produced a society where "'fresh contact'¹ is experienced in a persistent and cumulative fashion:

Many stories told in this country are stories of several 'fresh contact' themes combined. Generational rhetoric may be one appropriate expression and vehicle of this experience. In America, more than in Europe, generational imagery--in both its positivist and its romantic-historical versions--has provided a mental map for newcomers and their descendants, one that may have been more suited than historical or social analysis. This is true from the time of the first fresh-contact experience of the Puritans to twentieth-century interpretations of immigration" (211).

While the Canadian scene is clearly different from the American, and perhaps in significant ways, given Canada's counter-revolutionary origins (Lipset 1990), Sollors' comments are nevertheless in many ways applicable to Canada, also an immigrant society characterized by a high degree of mobility, and thus shaped by the imperatives of "fresh contact." Moreover, Canadian scholars of immigration have drawn on the work of a number of American scholars, in particular Marcus Lee Hanson who first delineated the (three) immigrant generations (1938) and Oscar Handlin (1951) who further popularized the notion without questioning the empirical reality or the utility of the concept. Many Canadian analysts assume that first, second, and third generations represent crucial stages in adjustment to Canadian life" (e.g. Kallen, *Spanning; Rasporich, Three*).

¹ In using the phrase "fresh contact" Sollors is quoting Karl Mannheim's 1928 study, "The Problem of Generations" in Paul Kecskemeti (ed.), *Essays in the Sociology of Knowledge*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1952, 276-322.

Though doubtless not as a direct result of the influence of these scholarly conventions, fictionalizers of immigrant and/or ethnic experience in Canada, both outsiders and insiders,² develop generational difference as an important discursive site. This schema generally constructs a first generation of "founders" or "pioneers", primarily middle-aged, whose time and energy is almost totally taken up with the physical tasks of settlement and economic survival, and whose deepest emotional ties remain to the "old world;" a second, troubled, generation (either brought over by their parents when very young or born here) who are often painfully caught between their parents' old world language, practices and expectations, and those of the new world, a position which forces them into the role of mediator, but also predisposes them to reject their parents and the old world they represent; and a third, redemptive, generation, born in the new world to parents who were born or at least raised here, and who are interested in integration: in regaining what the second generation lost of the old world, while also being comfortable in the new.³ Often more figuratively than literally accurate, this schema allows for one character's evolution through all of the positions represented as characteristic of each generation, but particularly for a spiritual passage from second to third-generation (Sollors, *Beyond* 219).

The evolution from one generational position to another provides an important part of the structural framework for many fictions of ethnicity. As such, it becomes a vehicle for developing both of the central motifs identified

² For example, Ralph Connor in *The Foreigner* (1909) distinguishes between the first generation (who are virtually beyond the reach of the redemptive touch of Anglo-Saxon Protestant missionaries), and the second, who, like Kalmar, might be redeemed by education and by marriage to an Anglo-Saxon. So too do such contemporary "ethnic" writers as Frank Paci and Joy Kogawa.

³ As Sollors points out, Hansen's view, i.e. that the third generation would see the error of the second-generation's rejection of the culture that the first generation brought with them, was so widely accepted that it has come to be called Hansen's "Law" of third-generation return -- "what the son wishes to forget the grandson wishes to remember" (215).

in Chapter One: the long journey and the edenic garden, and for answering the questions intrinsic to each of these motifs, i.e., is the New World a worthy destination? Can anything brought from the Old World (including individuals and families as well as cultural artifacts and practices) be successfully transplanted in the new? Generational interaction thus becomes a significant site of resistance, where, for example, the second-generation's desire to jettison the old in favour of the new, or the first generation's inability to adjust to Canada are interrogated.

Binary patterns are frequently combined with this generational schema to portray the dynamics of immigrant adaptation. Those that are most closely linked with the generational schema are success/failure; victim/villain; illusion/reality and remembering/forgetting. Often, this pattern is produced by second-or third-generation writers, those whose position is inevitably bi-cultural, and upon whom falls the 'postcolonial task' of appropriating English, making it "bear the burden" of their cultural experience, "...or as Raja Rao puts it, of 'convey(ing) in a language that is not one's own the spirit that is one's own'" (as quoted in Ashcroft et. al. 38-9). Such writers often become (whether reluctantly or otherwise) spokespeople for their group.⁴ Fraught with tensions, this role is a particularly powerful one, since

⁴ Interestingly, one finds daily evidence of the widespread salience of this generational schema and of the uncomfortable position and mediating role of the second-generation. For example, a recent story in the Calgary Herald "Neighbours" insert (week of July 25, 1996, p. 6), headlined "Vietnamese Gala hopes to promote understanding", quotes the second-generation organizer of the event, Chuong Ngo. "We're trying to bridge the generation gap between the first and second generation of immigrants," he explains... The gala highlights the problems faced by the youth and offers amicable ways to settle them." Ngo goes on to explain how he experiences his second-generation position, saying that he feels he is engaged in a "...struggle to keep a balance between the two cultures... There are times we almost have to lead two lives. You go to temple or church, you can't express yourself as an adult because of your language capacity. Also, the difficulty is to balance what Canadian culture has to offer and what to do at home." Significantly, the gala is also geared to a non-Vietnamese audience, to help them understand both something about Vietnamese culture and about the situation of Vietnamese immigrants. To this end, "...organizers plan to install a giant translation screen."

it involves challenging, subverting and opening up dominant discourse. Although Sollors is discussing ethnicity and American literature when he notes this phenomenon, his comments describe similar dynamics in Canada:

The point of departure of classic ethnic literature, and especially of writings in English, often was to blur ethnic stereotypes by presenting an inside view of ethnicity which could make 'otherness' understandable to American readers. Consciously or unconsciously, ethnic writers often assumed the roles of pleaders, mediators, or translators who explained ethnic traits, annotated ethnic jokes and phrases, or provided glossaries for the benefit of the reader.... Thus the ethnic writer as 'mediator' went out to break down the partition walls between ethnic group and larger culture (Sollors, *Literature and Ethnicity* 658).

The ethnic writer's apologist project has been influenced greatly by the well-documented connection in Canada between ethnicity and class. In the following section, I argue that this apologist project, which can also be understood within a post-colonial framework as a resistance project, is very often realized through a literary form that combines the generational schema and binary patterns referred to above, giving "ethnic minority writing (in Canada)...its emphasis on life experiences of immigrants, dislocation and duality" (Pivato *Ethnic Minority Writing*). The various polarities in these patterns are so closely interwoven as to be virtually inextricable; for the sake of analysis, however, I look at them separately. I begin with the success/failure polarity, since I believe that, like the Old/New polarity discussed in Chapter One, it is a deep, fundamental pattern, through which are woven related polarities, in particular, those of remembering/forgetting, victim/villain and illusion/reality.

The Success/Failure Polarity

In the years since the publication of John Porter's *The Vertical Mosaic* the relationship between ethnicity and socio-economic stratification in

Canada has become a commonplace for students and researchers in Canadian ethnic studies (Li Introduction). Considerably less attention, however, has been paid to the relationship between the vertical mosaic and cultural expression. In an article first published in 1963, "The Dodo and the Cruising Auk: Class in Canadian Literature," Robert McDougall argued that Canadian writers in general reflect Canada's elitist class structure, both in their own genteel backgrounds and in their failure to come to grips with the issue of class in Canada. Assessing the situation at that time, McDougall argued that, "Our literature shows what can only be described as an abnormal absence of feeling for class and of concern for what the class structure can do in a developing society to make or mar the life of the individual ... class is not a central issue in any significant part of our fiction" (McDougall 217). As I have already noted at some length in the "Introduction," much has changed in Canada since Professor McDougall wrote these words. Not the least of these changes has been the coming of age of multiculturalism and of ethnic minority literature in Canada--developments that are continuing to transform our discursive practice (Craig; Padolsky, *Canadian Ethnic*; Davey 1995).

If the relationship between ethnicity and class is as entrenched as Porter suggested,⁵ it would seem logical that the tensions and frustrations inherent in ethnic minority experience in Canada would be expressed by writers who portray this experience from the inside: and that furthermore, these writers would bring to Canadian literature the very sensibility McDougall found glaringly absent in 1963--one profoundly aware of the power of a class

5 A number of studies suggest that this relationship continues to be significant. One major study is Wallace Clement (1983). *Class, Power and Property: Essays on Canadian Society*. Toronto: Methuen. See also David Flaherty (1988). "Who Rules Canada," *DAEDALUS* (Special Issue, In Search of Canada), 117, 4, 99-128; Peter S. Li (1988). *ETHNIC INEQUALITY In A Class Society*. Toronto: Thompson Educational Publishing, Inc. Also *CANADIAN ETHNIC STUDIES* (1994). Special Issue: Racial and Ethnic Inequality 26,3; and Rick Helmes-Hayes and James Curtis, *The Vertical Mosaic: Revisited*, 1998.

structure, composed of a complex amalgam of economic status and ethnicity, to "make and mar" the lives of individuals, to dominate those outside the privileged centre.

Students of American society are well aware of the significance to American cultural dynamics of the intertwined narratives of the promised land and the dream of success and of how these macro-narratives, along with certain other elements in the American experience, have worked to promote American faith in upward mobility and in the melting pot (Parrington; H.N. Smith; Commager; Handlin; Dinnerstein and Reimers; Bodnar). They are also well aware of the role that literature, both *belles lettres* and popular, has played in creating and perpetuating, critiquing and modifying this mythology (Lynn; Fine; Boucher; Sollors, *Beyond*; Sollors, *Ethnicity*). Much less has been written about if and how the inevitable clash between Canada's own particular vision of itself as a land of opportunity and the stern realities of the "vertical mosaic" reverberated through the Canadian cultural imagination, helping to shape a sense of identity and of the possible, both for the nation as a whole and for the individuals within it.⁶ Literature by "insiders" about immigrant and ethnic experience, I would argue, is one of the major sites where the impact of the "vertical mosaic" has been explored; more precisely, what Kroetsch identifies as the "extreme tension between ideas of success and ideas of failure" (66), or the success/failure polarity, is the major vehicle for this exploration.

From the ages of exploration and colonization and even before, the new world has been a symbol of Europe's dreams, both spiritual and material, and a significant element in the New World's magnetism for the

⁶ For a wide-ranging look at this and related issues, see Allan Smith (1994). *CANADA, AN AMERICAN NATION? Essays on Continentalism, Identity and the Canadian Frame of Mind*. Montreal, Kingston, London, Buffalo: McGill-Queens University Press.

From the ages of exploration and colonization and even before, the new world has been a symbol of Europe's dreams, both spiritual and material, and a significant element in the New World's magnetism for the immigrant has been the potent mythology of North America as the New Eden (Marx; Hedges; Duffy; Rasporich, Utopian 1992). Inextricably tied up with this mythology, particularly as it relates to the immigrant experience (which is, after all, as Margaret Atwood and many others have pointed out, perhaps the archetypal experience of North American settler culture), has been the dream of success, and of course its mirror image, the nightmare of failure. If one decides to leave one's home for the Promised Land, one is perhaps inevitably going to feel obligated to find it. Whether envisioned as the place to build the perfect society, or to find personal wealth and ease, the New Eden demands that those who enter it prove their worthiness by succeeding.

Symbols of easy success abound in North American popular usage e.g., the golden mountain and streets paved with gold; both are typically subverted in fictions of ethnic minority experience through portrayals of Canada as a vertical mosaic, "a land of invisible ghettos" (George Woodcock as quoted in Mandel 59). The fictional landscape that emerges from a reading of ethnic minority fiction is indeed such a land, a complex, often psychically dangerous maze of interlocking microcosms whose real, but invisible boundaries separate their inhabitants from one another by complex sets of conventions that are based on a subtle blend of ethnicity, wealth and class. For example, in the opening pages of *Son of a Smaller Hero*, Mordecai Richler establishes the

central conflict between the aspirations of the protagonist, Noah Adler, and his ethnic identity. He does this through a vivid, poetic description of the dimensions and contours of the Jewish ghetto in Montreal, a ghetto that "has no real walls and no true dimensions. The walls are the habit of atavism and the dimensions are an illusion. But it is a ghetto that exists all the same"(14).

In describing Montreal's social geography, Richler makes it clear that the ghetto generates an enormous energy directed toward "moving up." The milieu of St. Lawrence Street, "the aorta of the ghetto" where most of the working class Jews "do their buying and their praying and their agitating and most of their sinning" (14) is florid, vibrant, but unsavoury:

Every night St. Lawrence Boulevard is lit up like a neon cake and used up men stumble out of a hundred different flophouses to mix with rabbinical students and pimps and Trotskyites and poolroom sharks. Hair tonic and water is consumed in back alleys. Swank whores sally at you out of the promised jubilee of the penny arcades. Crap games flourish under lamp posts. You can take Rita the Polack up to the Liberty Rooms or you can listen to Panofsky speak on Tim Buck and The Worker.... (15)

Conditions improve on the five streets between St. Lawrence Boulevard and Park Avenue. Here is the slightly more respectable business centre where "the aspiring" who "own haberdashery stores, junk yards, and basement zipper factories" sell the goods "cut or pressed by their relations below St. Lawrence Boulevard" (15). Still further on "above Park Avenue" in Outremont "a mild" neighborhood, live "the employer and professional Jews" who "own their own duplexes belong to the Freemasons, or, failing that, the Knights of Pythias and send their sons to McGill." But they too return to St. Lawrence Avenue to shop "where the Jews speak quaintly like the heroes of nightclub jokes" (15).

This reference to the quaint language of the immigrants who become heroes of "jokes" is an interesting one, because in juxtaposing seemingly contradictory attributes, the heroic and the comic, it embodies the ambivalence of Richler's upwardly mobile characters toward their ethnicity, an ambivalence that may be very near to the mainspring of ethnic humour (Klymasz, Joke); this deep ambivalence, encoded in language, and urban geography, is, as I argue throughout, a recurring theme in fictions that depict the second-generation perspective. Drawn to their Montreal roots, to the heart of the ghetto where the inhabitants, largely first-generation immigrants, cannot even partially hide their Jewish identity, but must proclaim it with every word they speak, the upwardly mobile, second-generation Jews come face-to-face with their former selves. That encounter is painful, stressful, because it plays on their anxieties about whether that self is acceptable, even admirable, or laughable, a joke.

Such ambivalence is also depicted in Marlyn's *Under the Ribs of Death* perhaps most vividly in a scene where Sandor Hunyadi, the young protagonist, deeply ashamed of his Hungarian roots, goes with his family to meet a group of newly arrived immigrants:

Sandor turned pale at the sight of them. They stood there, awkward and begrimed, the men in tight-fitting, wrinkled clothes, with their wrists and ankles sticking out, unshaven and foreign looking, the women in kerchiefs and voluminous skirts and men's shoes... exactly the way his grandmother looked in that picture in the front room. The kinship was odious. He knew how hard it was for his parents to change their ways. But they were changing. They used tinned goods sometimes at home now and store bought bread when they had enough money. English food was appearing on their table, the English language in their home. Slowly, very slowly they were changing. They were becoming Canadians. And now here it stood. Here was the nightmare survival of themselves mocking and dragging them back to their shameful past (16).

Although the boundaries and subtle gradations within the ghetto are somewhat less clearly delineated in *Under the Ribs of Death* than in *Son of a Smaller Hero*, and its inhabitants are a mixture of "foreigners" rather than a concentration of a particular group, the ghetto is nevertheless a very real entity in Marlyn's novel, one that engenders in the young Sandor a fierce determination to escape. "Some day he would grow up and leave all of this," he vows to himself as he surveys the squalor of Henry Street... leave it behind him forever and never look back, never remember again this dirty foreign neighborhood and the English gang who chased him home from school" (17). Painfully sensitive to dominant assimilative forces, he continually urges his father to change their Hungarian name to an English one. "We'd be like other people, like everybody else. But we gotta change it soon before too many people find out" (24). Later he confides in his Uncle Janos, who is more sympathetic to the materialistic ethos of North America than Sandor's father, "...some day I'm going to make a lot of money" (85).

The other most notably on-the-make character in ethnic minority fiction, and one who therefore invites comparison to Sandor is Mordecai Richler's Duddy Kravitz. Unlike Sandor, Duddy is less obsessed with obliterating his ethnicity than with being able to use it to move beyond the boundaries it seems to set for him. Indeed, Duddy exploits his Jewish background in his drive for wealth. This he does, quite literally, through his Bar Mitzvah films, which, in the hands of a pretentious, boozy and unreliable Anglo-Canadian filmmaker, become self-consciously anthropological studies of tribal rites that at once objectify and trivialize his ethnicity. That Duddy is able to use his background in this way is not because he is any more unprincipled than Sandor. (For example, Sandor brazenly charges his friends a fee to look through a toy kaleidoscope that his uncle has given him. And

later, as a young adult, he is willing to 'sell his uncle to the devil' when he urges Janos to marry the wealthy Fraulein Kleinholtz.) Rather, Duddy's ethnicity, nourished by a more extensive community with a stronger identity than the one that has shaped Sandor, has enabled him to develop greater personal flamboyance and confidence than the rather sullen Sandor, and an imaginative, if perverse, caste of mind, open to all possibilities in the struggle to succeed.

The ethnic ghetto is also portrayed in Adele Wiseman's *The Sacrifice* as a geographic entity that nourishes in many of its inhabitants a strong desire to escape. This desire is generally projected through the secondary characters of Chaim Knopp, the shoichet, and his son Ralph, rather than through the main character, Abraham, and his son Isaac, largely, perhaps, because the struggles of the latter are (insofar as one can make such a distinction) more spiritual than material. Chaim, like Abraham and his family, still lives in "the flats," the older immigrant centre of the Jewish ghetto. Its communal heart is the old white synagogue, which is close enough to Chaim's home for him to walk there on holy days. His son Ralph, on the other hand, has succeeded in moving to "the heights" because he owns a factory.

In the context of Ralph's ascent to "the heights" it is noteworthy that the image of urban geography presented in this novel and several others is a vertical one, disturbingly reminiscent of the configuration of Dante's inferno. The ghetto's centre is at the bottom of some structure, perhaps a pit, and each remove up from that bottom level is a successive move away from "pure" ethnicity toward assimilation and success, envisioned (albeit ultimately ironically) as existing somewhere at the top, in wealthy "English" or blandly 'non-ethnic' neighborhoods. Indeed, as seen through the eyes of Sandor

Hunyadi, who gains entry there briefly (appropriately enough) to mow the green lawns of the wealthy, this land at the top is a paradise "that lay smiling under a friendly spell, where the sun always shone, and the clean-washed tint of child and sky and garden would never fade" (Marlyn 64.) Clearly, one can read this vertical image as a trope of imperial relationships, with the ethnic "other" occupying the lowest rungs.

The success/failure polarity so central to Marlyn's fiction, is equally fundamental to many other fictions about immigrant and ethnic experience. Brian Moore's *The Luck of Ginger Coffey* is representative, with its focus on the struggle of an Irish immigrant--the tragi-comically boyish Ginger--to find a "respectable" niche in Montreal's stratified urban landscape. The verticality of the struggle, and Ginger's inevitable descent is captured in the recurring image of the elevator, which Ginger rides up to various unsuccessful job interviews, and down to his eventual employment as a proofreader in the bottom floor of the *Gazette* building. Urban images of verticality, including the elevator, are similarly, if more tragically, central to Austin Clarke's depiction of a Caribbean immigrant in his short story "Canadian Experience."

In addition to being symbolized in urban geography, tension between ethnicity and upward mobility is very often represented as part of a generation gap. Upwardly mobile second- and third-generation sons and daughters feel isolated from their immigrant parents and grandparents because of the often substantial differences between their customs and Canadian ones, and because of language barriers that make it difficult for them to communicate with each other, as, for example, in Frank Paci's *The Italians* and *The Black Madonna* in which the second-generation characters, Bill, Lorianna, and Marie, literally cannot talk with their parents about complex subjects. They are also (often) so deeply ashamed of their immigrant

parents that they refuse to acknowledge them because the latter's "blatant" ethnicity poses such a threat to their fragile "Canadian" identities. Wiseman portrays this situation in *The Sacrifice* through the second-generation character, Ralph Knopp. When his father, Chaim, dressed in his shoichet's clothes, passes him on the street, Ralph, who is with a "goy" friend, pretends not to know his father.

The children's need to reject their ethnicity, as embodied in their parents, particularly the same-sex parent, is often represented by an act of unnamings and renaming, as if the ethnic "baggage," represented by a "foreign" sounding name, can be jettisoned through this simple manipulation of language. The psychic dislocation that the younger feels is portrayed as being intimately related to a conflict between ethnic identity and upward mobility. Maria Barone becomes Marie; Stefano Mancuso becomes Stephen; Duddy Kravitz becomes Dudley Kane; Sandor Hunyadi becomes Alex Hunter. As a child, the latter had desperately begged his father to erase their "shameful past" by changing their name as soon as possible, and had fantasized that his real father was not Joseph Hunyadi, but an English lord (19).

Of course, not all of the inter-generational tensions in ethnic fiction are mediated through quasi-patricidal fantasies. Another common representational pattern involves stylized characters, sometimes nearly caricatures, who represent each generation and preside over the successive sections of the ghetto as spokespersons for the particular blend of spiritual and material values that permeates each stratum. The conflicts among these characters are those inherent in the processes of adaptation and the closely related one of succeeding. For example, such are the complex tensions between Melech Adler, immigrant patriarch, founder of the family scrap yard

business, and his sons as well as his grandson, Noah, the protagonist in *Son of a Smaller Hero*; and those in *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* between Duddy's grandfather, Simcha Kravitz, proud patriarch, repository of the family's spiritual heritage, and Benjy, his wealthy entrepreneurial son, ostensibly impotent, unable to produce an heir despite (or perhaps because of) having reached the heights, where he lives in a mansion modeled after the country estate of an English gentleman--a powerful symbol of the imperial centre--; and with third-generation Duddy himself who, as a son of the "failed" brother, Max, combination cab driver and pimp, is obsessed with the North American dream of material success. As a result, Duddy is incapable of fully grasping the spiritual nature of the edenic vision underlying his grandfather's admonition that "a man without land is nobody."

The dynamics created by generational conflict, urban geography and the tension between ethnicity and upward mobility are also of central importance in Paci's three novels. In *The Father*, the interplay of these elements is developed through a series of interlocking and conflicting binaries. The Mancuso family, a kind of collective character in the novel, and a central one, is presented through a series of dyadic conflicts between husband and wife, father and son, brother and brother. These conflicts grow out of the more fundamental dualities between heart and mind, spirit and matter, communalism and individualism, that are basic to the gap between the Old world and the New and that between the west-end Italian neighborhood where the Mancusos have their first bakery, and the more prosperous district to which they eventually move.

The relationship between Maddelena Mancuso, an educated, sophisticated urbanite from central Italy, and her husband, Oreste, a simple, warm-hearted baker from the agrarian Abruzzi in southern Italy, is torn apart

by the tensions generated by these fundamental dualities, which could be seen as symbolic of first- and second-generation positions, even though both characters are immigrants. Oreste, the man of the heart, the communal man, enjoys the idyllic life of baking bread for his friends and neighbors in the west-end 'ghetto'--the new-world re-creation of the old world village. In contrast, Maddelena wants to "get ahead." She adapts well to Canada, learning, through reading, to speak an English that Stephen recognizes as being "better" than that used by his teachers. She also takes business courses that eventually enable her to transform the old bakery, with its stone oven just like the one that Oreste had used in his Abruzzi village, into an efficient city-wide operation that replaces Oreste's skillful, caring hands with machines, the stone oven with large "automated" ones of chrome and steel.

The Mancuso sons, the studious Stephen, the main character from whose point of view the story is presented, and the rebellious Michael, inherit and further symbolize the duality embodied in their parents' relationship. Michael, though resembling Maddelena physically, is, given his emotional nature, Oreste's spiritual son. In contrast, Stephen, though resembling Oreste, is, with his detached, rational nature, Maddelena's spiritual offspring. This conflict-producing and potentially crippling inheritance turns both sons into fractured, tortured beings, particularly Stephen, whose spiritual deformity is symbolized in his withered hand. Indeed, the entire novel could be read as a chronicle of Stephen's spiritual journey toward wholeness or salvation. He falls from innocence early in the novel in a thinly veiled Garden-of-Eden scene in which he is injured, marked for life, while stealing fruit from a neighbor's apple tree. Both his symbolic deformity and his struggle to find himself and some kind of inner peace are intimately tied up with second-generation immigrant experience. Entailing

as it does a wrenching break with the past, and an intense need to reconcile the disparate elements in one's being in order to discover or create one's identity in a sterile, materialistic and potentially destructive North American setting, second-generation experience can be seen as an apt vehicle for representing a post-colonial struggle of identity.

Particularly interesting as a strategy of resistance is the relationship Paci portrays in *The Father* between, on the one hand, the dualities inherent in the garden myth--particularly good/evil, paradise/exile, body/spirit and, on the other hand, the ethnic ghetto and upward mobility. Albeit with some ambivalence, in the fictional world Paci creates, the ethnic ghetto symbolizes the positive side of this duality, the territory beyond it, the negative.⁷ Oreste's feeling for his work and his West End "village" is a deeply religious one. His baking of bread and making of wine are religious rites which he conducts garbed in his baker's "whites"--a miracle similar somehow, though reversed, to the miracle of transubstantiation presided over by the robed priest. Both "miracles" transcend time and resolve duality, uniting past and present, body and spirit. Like the priest who introduces the young Stefano, as an altar boy, to the mysteries behind the altar, Oreste takes the young Stephen into the bakery to witness the mystery of bread making:

Oreste explained a few details about the nature of the dough and how it had been left to rise during the night.... Stefano smiled and stood to the side. Oreste took out a white paper cap from his back pocket and put it on. Stefano saw his father turn his face away for a moment, as if he had something in his eye. Then he made the sign of the cross.... The oven is the most important part of the bakery, Stefano. This is an old oven made of bricks, see. The stone inside is important for the taste. We make our bread just like The Romans did thousands of years ago.... People were making bread before they could write (37).

⁷ One could argue that this reveals the position of the authorial voice as third-generation.

Later, Oreste shows Stefano who "listened in awe," how he makes his special bread--bread so much a reflection of himself that it has his name: "Orestepan."

See how its done, Stefano.... You have to touch it a certain way. With the heel of your palms. Then the fingers. Add a little flour. Don't let it get too pasty. But just right. There, see. There's nothing better in the world to eat than bread. We keep the first loaf to remind us of the care we put into it (40,41).

Oreste also explains to Stefano that part of the secret of his bread is his own happiness ("Bread can't grow ... under the hands of a sad man"), and knowing the people he bakes for: "I couldn't make bread just for strangers. You gotta care about what you do, Stefano. You can't care for the bread if you bake for ... strangers" (60).

Thus, as the village baker of the West End, Oreste lives an almost idyllic existence in which the miracle of bread making unites him with his surroundings. Like the pre-war Abruzzi village that he was forced to leave by the war, the west-end *gemeinschaft* neighborhood is, for Oreste, a kind of Eden. But he senses the possible intrusion of disruptive forces when he curses Canadian bread, so unlike his own. "Crust is the soul of bread, figlio mio" he tells Stefano. "Never forget. In this country they don't believe in crust.... they don't know bread at all in this country" (40).

Oreste's sense of the significance of this difference between his bread and the soulless "soft mushy rolls" produced in the new world foreshadows both his gradual exile and destruction and that of the west end--a destruction brought about by his wife's "success" and by "the devastation of urban renewal." Nor does Paci provide any hopeful hint of paradise in the efficient machines and the "apartment houses and parking lots" that replace the baker and his village (134). Indeed, it is only when Stefano/Stephen, despite his

doctorate in philosophy and his overly cerebral approach to life, at last returns symbolically to his father, and all that he represents, that the reader glimpses a positive resolution to the fundamental conflicts that have fragmented the Mancuso family and Stephen's psyche. This occurs in the novel's final scene in which Stephen goes to the modern Mancuso bakery to bake bread as his father once taught him to do:

He held the dough in place with his deformed hand. With the heel of the palm of his other hand he flattened the tough dough outward, then folded it, and kneaded it again.... In the silence of the huge automated bakery he began to whistle... The next day he was scheduled to fly back to Toronto and resume his teaching duties, but today he was a baker carrying on his father's work.... Then he rolled six long sticks of dough. On top of the loaves he formed the initials of his father, his mother and his brother.... That was his family (193).

This mystical, transcendent rite of bread making, conducted in a language of action rather than word, enables him to reconcile family conflict, particularly with his father, and thus the warring dualities in his nature--dualities that reflect the larger conflict between his ethnicity and "success" in the new world. Paci's portrayal, in its championing of the immigrant generation and the old-world values it embodies, reflects an integrative third-generation position, while at the same time portraying the second-generation dilemma sympathetically. But even this dramatic, very personal resolution of the conflict between ethnic identity and social mobility is momentary, fleeting, and does not fully remove the intangible psychological and social barriers to the full acceptance and "complete success" that often continue to elude the second-generation character, even when he is able, as Stefano/Stephen is, to move beyond the ghetto that gave meaning to and yet limited his father's life in the new world.

Richler's farcical humour and sometimes biting social criticism depend in large measure on the difficulty his second- and/or third-generation characters have in crossing intangible but real social borders--barriers of class and ethnicity that reinforce the physical boundaries of the complex succession of territories constituting his fictional Montreal. The incongruity between his scrappy Jewish protagonists, particularly Duddy Kravitz and Joshua Shapiro, and the superficially genteel Anglo-Canadian world that they blunder through, in picaresque fashion, without having mastered its social conventions, is central, both structurally and thematically in *The Apprenticeship* and *Joshua Then and Now*. Like Saul Bellows' *The Adventures of Augie March*, these novels encode a binary sensibility, one that experiences the physical and social space beyond the loved and hated ghetto as a foreign land where if one enters, one is not only, of necessity, an adventurer, but also, almost inevitably, a heathen. While the insipid Anglo-Canadian elite Richler constructs, embodied in characters like the bloodless Professor Theo Hall in *Son of a Smaller Hero* and in the seamless Mr. Calder in *The Apprenticeship*, may be attracted to the exotic vitality and directness of a Noah Adler or a Duddy Kravitz, their attraction fades when the latter transgress certain, largely unspoken, rules. For example, the wealthy Hugh Calder cools toward Duddy when the latter "takes advantage" of their friendship to make a deal with Calder for his ghetto friend, Cohen, the scrap yard dealer:

"I suppose, Mr. Calder said, pushing his plate away, "that I should have expected something like this from you. I had hoped we were friends."

"Sure we are, Duddy had replied, blushing. But friends help each other."

... "I expect," Mr. Calder has said, "that you're earning a good commission on this."

Something had risen in Duddy's stomach. His eyes filled. "I look after myself," he had said. "Why not? Why not, indeed?"

... White men, Duddy thought. *Ver gerharget*. With them you just didn't make deals.

You had to diddle.... He's offended, Duddy thought, but he made the deal all the same.

Two-fifty more a ton, sure. I suppose he wanted me to play golf with him for eighteen years first or something.... (227)

Similarly, though Marlyn's tone is not, like Richler's, humorous, Sandor Hunyadi in *Under the Ribs of Death* finds that his ethnicity prevents him from crossing certain invisible boundaries. When he attempts to move beyond the North End by applying for a job with an "English" firm (Crown Investment "est'd 1705"), Sandor finds that his interviewer is interested not in his business knowledge and experience, but in his family background:

"Hunter," he said reflectively. 'Any relation of Colonel Hunter?'... For the next few minutes, Alex found himself facing a leisurely barrage of questions.... The questions grew more personal.... At the mention of Selkirk Avenue, he thought he detected a flicker of expression in the man's eyes, too transient to be interpreted. At the next question, framed in the same courteous, almost off-hand manner as the others, he felt the colour mounting to his cheeks. He cleared his throat. "Hungarian," he said. (136)

Clearly, Canada's (neo) colonial "configuration of domination" is inscribed in Marlyn's text, as is its power to circumscribe the life of his aspiring protagonist. However, as well as being marred by this configuration, Sandor Hunyadi is characterized as also drawing from it a sense of his own unique (if undervalued and overlooked) potential. Like Frank Cowperwood in Theodore Dreiser's three volume exploration of the "dream of success" in America, Stefano Mancuso, Duddy Kravitz and Sandor Hunyadi develop early a sense that they are set apart, that theirs is to be a unique destiny.⁸

⁸ For a thorough discussion of this and other aspects of Dreiser's portrayal of success and failure, see Alfred Kazin and Charles Shapiro, eds. (1965). *The Stature of Theodore Dreiser: A Critical Survey of the Man and His Work*. Bloomington: University of Indiana Press.

Stefano, made exceptional in childhood by his withered hand, wants first to become a priest, then later, his faith shaken, a thinker, a seeker of truth, and is isolated from his peers by his seriousness and his intense intellectuality. Duddy Kravitz, on the other hand, has an equally intense yearning for money, land and prestige. As a young boy, "Duddy wanted to be a somebody... Not a loser, certainly..." (62). Later, with grim confidence, he tells his fellow waiters at a resort hotel where he works in the summer, "If you want to bet on somebody, bet on me" (95). Sandor, too, has a dream (nurtured by the subordinate position he finds so painful) of becoming somebody 'who mattered'--a businessman with an English name. Interestingly, Dreiser's Cowperwood, having thoroughly absorbed the discourse of dominance takes as his role model the black grouper, a sinister fish who feeds off the smaller fish around him; and, unfettered by ethnicity or scruples, he achieves most of his financial and romantic dreams. Typically, for the second/third-generation protagonists in fiction about immigrant and/or ethnic experience in Canada, success is never on such a grand scale, and even when they do achieve their material goals, as Duddy does, the reality of that success is scrutinized somewhat more than in Dreiser's admittedly ambivalent portrayal of Cowperwood.

This gap between the protagonists's yearning reach and his ultimate grasp is typically portrayed as a function of two things: first, the enormity of the psychic and social distance between the ethnic character's world and the world where 'success' on Canadian terms is possible; second, the concomitant absence of mentors, role models who can span the distances between the various levels of the mosaic (and between the generational positions) and thereby, like Dante's Virgil, guide the success-bound traveler on his upward journey. These two motifs constitute a powerful social-realist testament of

immigrant and ethnic struggle in Canadian society, a kind of sociological discourse of resistance; however, the moral purchase of that discourse derives most forcefully from the devices of irony that are so common a feature of it, and which, in conjunction with the apologist impulse to document, interrogate and at times totally subvert the dominant narratives of new world paradise and immigrant success.

Stefano/Steven Mancuso, early realizing the inadequacy as mentors of his father, the ghetto/village baker and of Father Kiley, the village priest who is also an immigrant, has no role models until, as a graduate student, he happens upon the work of the linguistic philosopher, Ludwig Wittgenstein. Having inherited a problematized language, he is naturally drawn to a language guru, and he adopts not only Wittgenstein's cool rationality, but also his personal affectations. But Wittgenstein ultimately proves inadequate as a model for dealing with the interrelated challenges of developing a balanced identity and of finding love. Similarly, the role models Duddy and Sandor choose prove inadequate guides in the quest for success. Sandor, rejecting his father's lofty humanism, wants to be like Mr. Nagy, the warped and unfeeling north end realtor/landlord whose obsession with making and hoarding money not only leaves him alone in squalid surroundings, but ultimately destroys any chance he has to be remembered in any positive light:

... there was something about him, in the way he sat there, his body tensed as though ready to spring, his hands with their thick yellow nails, half-closed and twitching on his knees--something in the moist red lips and white glistening teeth that reminded [Sandor] of an old, lean and hungry wolf. One could almost hear those teeth cutting through bone and tissue, and hear them crunch as they bit into their victim (Marlyn 119).

Sandor/Alec himself is ultimately Nagy's victim, not only because Nagy refuses to will him his business, choosing instead to build a mausoleum to

himself, but at a deeper level, because Sandor is so thoroughly deceived by Nagy, and the materialism he represents. Sandor has also been captivated as a youth, when he was despairing of ever being able to leave the "howling chaos" of Henry Street, by the hero of an Horatio Alger novel and, though he questions the uncompromising morality of Alger's heroic street urchin, Sandor is thrilled and heartened by what he perceives to be Alger's message:

He stood there filled with wonder that there should be such a book, giving him back his own dreams, his own secret longings that had stirred within him so long.... The great ones in this book were the doers, the men of wealth and power, the men who counted.... And one had only to work hard and devote oneself wholeheartedly to the things they believed to become one of them.... When the time came he would get a job with Mr. Nagy. He knew now how to ask for one (111).

Not until the end of Marlyn's novel, when the shining world of big business has collapsed into the squalor of the Great Depression, does Sandor have reason to question the discursive bias embedded in Ragged Jack's fictional climb, or Alger's efficacy as a mentor.

Like Sandor, Richler's Duddy Kravitz feels the need for a guide on his journey to success. "You've got to start operating ... he tells himself.... But where does a guy start.... Where and how? Duddy has also been raised on an inadequate, albeit subversive narrative. Though he later becomes obsessed with self-help books, Duddy's first inspiration is the second-generation 'Boy Wonder,' drug-dealer, gambler, racketeer and hero of a modern folktale of the ghetto perpetuated by Duddy's storytelling father, Max. The continuing saga of the Boy Wonder's remarkable feats and exploits has shaped Duddy's sense of the world and nourished his hope of being allowed to meet him and get his advice someday, almost as a rite of passage. Duddy "likes to think ... that point for point he was a lot like the Boy Wonder before he had made his name" (62). Later, Duddy is surprised to find that the Wonder's reputation as

a hero does not extend beyond the borders of the ghetto, and that in the patrician world of Hugh Calder, being connected with Jerry Dingleman, gangster, is no asset.

This absence of appropriate role models, and the related floundering and sense of malaise at the community level is also an important theme in *Son of a Smaller Hero*, in which Richler notes that "the aspiring walked without certainty, pompous and ingratiating by turns" (17). When Noah declares himself to be in search of the meaning of life and his place in it by moving away from home and into an apartment outside the physical boundaries of the ghetto, he is courted by a series of would-be mentors, from both inside and outside the Jewish community, but none proves adequate to the task. The Anglo-Canadian professor, Hall, is a weakling, a phony, but so too is old Melech Adler, whose stern orthodoxy masks his own old-world sins. Noah's maternal grandfather, a respected Chassidic teacher (the more so in his mother's coloured remembrances), is dead. Indeed, the central event in the novel, the death of Noah's father in a supposedly heroic attempt to rescue the Torah from fire, was nothing of the sort, and his posthumous elevation to community hero, celebrated even by the *goyim*, suggests a loss of vitality and integrity in the Jewish community that precipitates Noah's quest to become just "a human being" (203).

Thus, whether their search focuses on the largely spiritual goal of integrating the disparate elements that constitute their lives, or the material goal of achieving wealth to prove their worthiness, the questing second-generation protagonists in ethnic minority fiction have few effective guides. Although those whose goals are spiritual seem ultimately closer to reaching them than do those who are bent on material success, the journey to either is tortuous, complicated by the complex physical and social barriers that make it

difficult for immigrants and their children to find paradise in the New World.

The Victim/Oppressor Polarity

The binary pattern in fiction about immigrant and ethnic experience underlying the delineation of urban geography, evident in the ambivalence toward the ghetto (squalid, shameful, but comfortable--home) and toward the affluent neighborhoods (shining, seamless, but cold, lonely and perhaps ultimately masking a spiritual sterility, if not death) that surfaces again and again in the work of Richler, Marlyn, Paci and others, is reinforced by a closely related ambivalence toward both the victim and the oppressor in the struggle to succeed. When the ethnic protagonists in the struggle ask themselves, as they inevitably do, why Henry Street is their lot and why they find it so difficult to move beyond it, they find the answer either in an outside villain or in themselves and they often entertain both possibilities simultaneously.⁹ When the aspiring twelve-year-old Sandor Hunyadi gets his first real job and a chance to move, although only briefly and as a menial, into the pastoral world of the "English" suburbs, he both resents and loves the haughty sensibility he encounters there, one that puts him in his place:

⁹ Mandel (59) discusses this ambivalence perceptively using Sartre's figure of the whirligig to describe it as "...an opposition in which the opposing forces endlessly turn into one another and in which an endless oscillation between them appears to be the only mode of existence for the individual so trapped." A more recent post-colonial analysis, such as that of Itwaru and Ksonzek (1995) would describe this process as evidence of the struggle by the dominated or invaded to decolonize--to root out the internalized attitudes of the colonizer.

Very leisurely she (his prospective employer) lowered the plump, jeweled hand which held the letter and looked out across the lawn, her gaze sweeping past him to return slowly and settle upon him, in an unexpected, careless way, Sandor thought, an insulting way, subjecting him to a long scrutiny from head to toe and back again several times, but without the flicker of an eyelid or the faintest expression of interest--much as he himself, he felt, might look if he should happen to glance absent-mindedly at a fence post. And yet in spite of this he could not help feeling that there was something in her manner which was appropriate and fitting, something which caused his resentment to fade and filled him again with pride; he was going to work for her, and so in a sense he belonged to her house and some of this splendid high arrogance of hers would be his too. This is the way it should be... This is how the English should act... dignified and cool eyed and distant (65).

That Sandor has internalized the "English" attitude toward him as a "foreigner," a "Bohunk," despite his resentment of it, and that it has become part of his psychological make up as an adult is obvious at crucial points in his struggle to succeed. After experiencing the polite cruelty of discriminatory hiring practices that make it ever clearer to him that his territory must remain the North End, where he seems fated to "mark time, working for one small hole-in-the-wall outfit after another, crawling around through slums, spending himself in dreary quarrels over leaking roofs and plugged drains and rent" (183), Sandor blames himself: "He felt it again and was surprised that it should be the same, the same uncoiling disgust, the revulsion he could not bring himself to direct outward, but must turn it upon himself (137).

Sandor's profoundly colonial vision of himself as one who deserves to be a victim extends even to his distrusting the judgment and worth of the few Anglo Canadians he meets who do not discriminate against him. When he is unable to find evidence of prejudiced attitudes in Lawson, a younger-generation businessman who extols Canadian rather than 'British' solidarity, Sandor comes "to believe that Lawson was in some indefinable way inferior

to those who harboured such feelings--as though the mere fact of Lawson's friendship with someone foreign-born was a flaw in his character, an indication of weakness" (175).

This preoccupation with hegemony and victimization so important in Marlyn's insightful portrayal of the second-generation ethnic character is also a dominant theme in Frank Paci's novels, indeed, in Italian-Canadian writing generally (Amprimoz and Viselli; Sciff-Zamaro; Pivato, *Death*; Padolsky, *The Place*). Paci's fictional landscape is dotted with maimed and crippled characters whose injuries, like Stefano Mancuso's crippled hand, highlight the motif of immigrant as victim and symbolize the price of entry exacted by the New World: Oreste Mancuso, victim of the Second World War, alcoholism and the demise of the west end neighborhood, is killed in a car accident; Alberto Gateano, stoic, largely unappreciated patriarch in *The Italians* loses his right arm in a bizarre accident at the steel plant where he has worked faithfully since coming to Canada as a young man; displaced peasant mother, Assunta Barone in *The Black Madonna*, is killed, horrendously dismembered when she is hit by a train. Paci's depiction of these victims--usually members of the immigrant generation, often voiceless in the Canadian milieu, misunderstood by their Canadian-born children--focuses not so much on the underlying causes of their victimization, nor on its subtle psychological or inter-ethnic dynamics, but on their children's coming to grips with it as one of the inescapable elements in their own lives. Richler's exploration of the dynamics of the victim/oppressor relationship, on the other hand, encompasses, perhaps even emphasizes, its role in inter ethnic relations.

Marlyn lays bare Sandor's need for his oppressors, "the English," as scapegoats for his own weaknesses, but more profoundly as a kind of perverse

conduit to the wealth and prestige that he can only experience vicariously by being associated, even as their lackey, with them. Similarly, Richler dissects, even burlesques, the Jewish need for the *goyim*, not only for their value as scapegoats, but also for the indispensable role they play in helping to create and maintain Jewish identity. In this project, both writers, though with very different tones, highlight the subordinate group stance Said and others have identified as separatist nationalism, revealing its ironic dependence on the oppressor. Said draws on the work of Partha Chatterjee to explain the irony of this position. "(M)uch nationalist thought...depends upon the realities of colonial power, either in totally opposing it or in affirming a patriotic consciousness" (Said, *Culture* 217). Richler, like Marlyn, reveals the dynamics of this position in the inter- and intra- group relations he portrays.

The boundaries that demarcate the ethnic- and class-based hierarchy in Richler's fictional landscape are revealed, not only as barriers to mobility, but also as essential ingredients in the complex symbiosis between inter- and intra-group relations. "There is the kind of Jew," Noah, in *Son of a Smaller Hero* tells his 'shiksa' mistress, Miriam, "who gets the same nourishment out of a *Goy* as the worst type of communist gets from a lynching in the south. Take the *Goy* away from him and you're pulling out the thread that holds him together" (168). Richler's characters illustrate this point by drawing nourishment from the *Goy* oppressor in a variety of ways.

While Noah and his gang of childhood friends in *Son of a Smaller Hero* are humiliated by the discrimination they encounter at Laurentian resorts, their elevation to heroic status, if only for a night, depends on the existence of the sign, "this Beach is restricted to Gentiles," which they steal and replace with "This Beach is Restricted to Litvaks" (54, 56). The wealthy Mr. Cohen, one of Duddy Kravitz's would-be mentors in *The Apprenticeship*, uses the

Goy more reprehensibly to justify his sharp business practices, and the spectre of anti-Semitism to assuage Duddy's guilt over his part in his epileptic employee's accident:

"My attitude even to my oldest and dearest customer is this," he said, making a throat-cutting gesture.... A plague on all the goy," that's my motto. The more money I make the better care I take of my own, the more I'm able to contribute to our hospital, the building of Israel, and other worthy causes. So a goy is crippled and you think you're to blame. Given the chance he would have crippled you," he shouted, "or thrown you into a furnace like Six million others" (226).

In *Son of a Smaller Hero*, Noah's rich uncle, Max, uses a variation of the same argument to justify blatantly distorting the facts and significance of the death of his brother, Wolf Adler, for the sake of enhancing the profile of the Jewish community, reaffirming group solidarity and improving his own political prospects: "Do you know what would happen if the so-called true story of Wolf's death got out? The anti-Semites would have a ball. It would prove to them that the Jews only care for money. That they'll even die for it" (191). When Noah wants to tell the truth about his father's supposedly heroic death, Max accuses Noah of being "the biggest goddamn anti-Semite I've ever met" (191), thereby conjuring up the presence of the goy within the group as a means of exerting social control.

But it is not only businessmen/politicians with questionable ethics who use the presence of the oppressor for their own purposes. Panofsky, the idealistic communist in *Son of a Smaller Hero* --another contender for mentor to Noah--is a variation on the type of Jew identified by Noah as one who "claims all the famous dead and flings them into the faces of prejudiced persons like bits of coloured paper" (168). For Panofsky, the inefficacy of all of history's Jewish heroes against the intractable anti-Semitism of the Goyim is testament to the truth of Marxism and the necessity of the revolution, and, of

course, provides the basis for his particular interpretation of Wolf Adler's death:

We discovered cures and it didn't help and we made for them philosophies and they chased us away and invented so they'd take the invention and deport the inventor and we made beautiful pictures and books and they weren't ours and even money--which is the cheapest of things--they wouldn't let us keep. Always tenants, never landlords. Anyway, now newer ones are already back there in that fertile land making believe that history goes backwards.... But you go talk to the Goyim. You go if you want and tell them. Marx and Spinoza, tell them Trotsky too, tell them Einstein and Freud, tell them ... that a small man died for nothing in a fire ... and made for us a smaller hero than we usually put up (155).

A highly ambiguous event at its centre, one that lends itself to a variety of interpretations and uses, and a remarkably enigmatic character the catalyst of that event, *Son of a Smaller Hero* unites the theme of the second-and third-generation quest for identity with that of the uses of history. Indeed, one could read the novel as an exploration of the use of history as a weapon, not only in a war of competing ideologies, but of competing identities and in the related struggle to succeed in an urban vertical mosaic where ethnic and class boundaries and identities sustain each other in a paradoxical process that both nourishes and destroys individuals. The ambivalence that is evoked via a fictional ghetto that is at once hated and loved is also apparent in this portrayal of conflicting attitudes toward the historical interpretations of heroism and culpability that shape and sustain group identities.¹⁰

An awareness of the significance of language as creator and purveyor of these events and identities is inherent in the novel's structure, made up, as it is, of chapters that carry the names of various characters who present therein

¹⁰ For a thought-provoking commentary that uses a case study as the basis for a theoretical discussion of the relationship between history and the construction of identity, particularly in a multicultural society, see Howard Aster (1986). "Jews and Ukrainians in Canada in the Aftermath of the Deschênes Commission: An Opinion." *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, 19, 2, 79-88.

their interpretation of the central event, and in the characterization of Wolf Adler. Wolf is a man who goes to great lengths to keep his inner self inaccessible by writing his diary in a private code. Ironically, however, once deciphered, the code reveals not depths, but surfaces, or as George Woodcock puts it in his introduction to the novel, "a secret life of terrifying banality" (x). Wolf's deciphered diary, an empty discourse of displacement, is a minute record of how many steps he walks each day, the average number of steps in a trip to the toilet, the number of hours wasted yearly in sleep. Through this graphic discrepancy between medium and message, Richler suggests discursively a troubling confusion, an unsettling facelessness at the core of Jewish identity. "He died a Jew," the Rabbi says (113) at Wolf Adler's funeral as he extols the heroism of the departed, yet Wolf Adler has been variously presented as victim, scoundrel, and insipid weakling as well as *héro*. The question of who his father and the quintessential Jew really is, if indeed the latter exists, haunts Noah's avowed quest for his own identity, for "some knowledge of himself that was independent of others" (198). And it is a quest that necessitates a journey through labyrinths and mirrors, complicated as it is by the seeming dependence of ethnic identity on victims and villains, the difficulty of distinguishing between the two and Noah's own ambivalence--his nostalgic longing for something that "one could wholly belong to" uncompromised by "buts and parenthesis" (169) and his equally fierce determination to discover himself *per se*, independent of any group dynamics.

It is interesting to note at this point that Noah, in quest of identity, like his counterparts in other insider fictions of ethnic minority experience, including those whose search is more directly linked with achieving material success, requires the assistance of a Beatrice. The protagonist's love affair,

even marriage, with a shiksa is an inevitable and integral element in Richler's fictional world. The non-Jewish woman becomes a link not only to the world of tender and erotic emotion, but also to the physical and social territories beyond the ghetto, and a symbol of both rebellion and success. Noah is irresistibly drawn to Professor Hall's wife, Miriam; Duddy depends heavily, for both emotional and practical support, on Yvette, though interestingly, he discounts somewhat her potency as a shiksa because she is French- rather than Anglo-Canadian.

Similarly, Paci's characters, both male and female, are frequently dependent on their lovers, often non-Italians, to connect them with the larger society and/or with positive forces. In *The Father*, Stefano Mancuso depends on Anna, his passionate Ukrainian-Canadian girlfriend, to put him in touch with his own emotions and to help him integrate his mind and heart, thereby beginning to integrate his multi-faceted identity. Marie in *Black Madonna* is drawn to and marries the cool, Anglo-Canadian Richard in an effort to free herself from the powerful influence of her mother, the very embodiment of her Italian "descent." Sandor Hunyadi in *Under the Ribs of Death* depends on Mary Kostaniuk, whom he eventually marries, as his link to human warmth and, ultimately, for his salvation. Often, these relationships are positive, humanizing forces in the lives of the troubled and driven second/third-generation protagonists; often, however, e.g., Noah's relationship with Miriam and particularly Duddy's relationship with Yvette, they are based on the same ambiguous victim/oppressor dynamic that underlies the conflict between ethnic identity and upward mobility.

The fuzziness of the distinction between victim and oppressor, hero and villain, is also dramatized again and again in other ways in insider fiction about immigrant and/or ethnic experience. Though open to less sinister

interpretations than Wolf Adler's supposed attempt to rescue the Torah, Isaac's motivations for a similar act in *The Sacrifice*--rescuing the Torah from a burning synagogue--are also unclear, even to himself, thus rendering indeterminate the final meaning of the act and his subsequent death. But the moral ambiguity of the world depicted in *The Sacrifice* is most dramatically captured in the central event of the novel--Abraham's ritual murder of Laiah. Abraham is a classic victim--of east-European pogroms in which two of his sons were killed, of the immigrant experience itself which requires him, a man well into middle age, to attempt to bridge the gap between life in an old-world shtetl and life in a North American frontier city: to "dance to the tune of the stranger." Yet Abraham also becomes a knife-wielding murderer who slaughters the irritating, but nevertheless largely innocent Laiah in a bizarre, mad attempt to right moral imbalance through the ancient ritual of sacrifice.

Profound moral ambiguity is also at the uncertain centre of the universe depicted in *Under the Ribs of Death*, again dramatized through the interplay of victim/villain characters whose actions can be variously interpreted depending on who is viewing them and in what light. This interplay is often within the ethnic ghetto, but at the same time it is nearly always set against the broader context of the same interplay between the powerful "other"--the "English," the Goy, the "stranger"--and the ethnic characters. Sandor is clearly a victim of Mr. Nagy's obsessive, small-minded avarice, but Nagy too, also an immigrant, has been the victim of the stereotyping and discrimination that Sandor encounters when he tries to do business outside the North End. And victim Sandor becomes villain as the unfeeling landlord who evicts poor tenants from Nagy's squalid properties when they are unable to pay the rent. Sandor's Uncle Janos is also a victim, of an unhappy marriage to Fraulein Kleinholtz, yet he is guilty of having lied to her in order to marry her for her money. Even the nearly

unrelentingly villainous Fraulein, ugly, grasping, witch like, becomes a victim when she tells her own story of having been deserted by her first husband. And, at the novel's end, one must once again wonder about Sandor and whether he is a victim of the vertical mosaic, or of his own gullibility, his own willingness to be seduced by the materialistic world that collapses around him during the Great Depression.

Moral ambiguity is similarly dramatized in Paci's work. Assunta Barone in *Black Madonna* is another prototypical victim--of extreme poverty in Italy, of the New world, to which she has been unable to adapt and to which she has, in large measure, lost her children; and yet she is also guilty, albeit unwittingly, of tyrannizing her children, of distorting their lives; and her final victimization--her severe depression and death, perhaps suicide--leaves them a potentially crippling inheritance. To draw on another example, Jacob Grossman, the central character in Henry Kreisel's *The Rich Man* also inhabits a morally ambiguous world in which he is both victim and villain: victim of the vertical mosaic as an immigrant in Toronto, where he has never been able to move beyond a menial factory job; of the gulf between the old world and the new, particularly of the promised-land mythology long a part of that gulf, and most of all, of the conditions in Europe that produced the holocaust. Yet, all of these elements of his victimization converge, turning him into a kind of passive villain, who deceives his family with false hope when their need is incalculably dire.

The complexities of victimization--of individuals and of whole communities--and of the writer's apologist project are explored even more fully in Joy Kogawa's *Obasan* (1981). This is perhaps not surprising, since as a self-avowed spokesperson for her community (Kogawa 1985), Kogawa is dealing with what is arguably the most blatant and serious example of an

ethnic community's victimization in Canadian history: the relocation of Japanese-Canadians during the Second World War (Adachi; Ward; Sunahara). Through the familiar binary patterns connected with the old/new and success/failure polarities--and in particular those of victim/oppressor and remembering/forgetting--and the generational schema, along with a sophisticated metafictional technique (Hutcheon, *The Canadian*) that draws attention to the limitations of language, to the constructedness and subjectivity of any discourse, whether history or fiction, Kogawa resists both the distortions of the "imperial" versions of the story, as well as the silence of Japanese-Canadians.

From the outset of *Obasan* in an enigmatic "Prologue" Kogawa problematizes language and her role as storyteller:

There is a silence that cannot speak. There is a silence that will not speak. Beneath the grass the speaking dreams and beneath the dreams is a sensate sea. The speech that frees comes forth from the amniotic deep. To attend its voice, I can hear it say, is to embrace its absence. But I fail the task. The word is stone. I admit it.

Kogawa's highlighting of the problematics of "coming to voice" and of "speaking for" a particular group of "silenced"/silent people connects her text with the postcolonial project generally, and reveals some of the fundamental processes of textual resistance.

Significantly, Kogawa puts a second/third-generation character at the center of her fiction, one who can move both literally and figuratively between the two positions. As Mason Harris explains,

The importance of ...generations in the Japanese Canadian community is indicated by the fact that they are given special names: *Issei* (immigrants from Japan), *Nisei* (the first generation born in Canada), and *Sansei* (the children of the *Nisei*).... Though Naomi is a *Sansei* by birth, the fact that she was raised by an immigrant aunt and uncle

puts her more in the cultural situation of the Nisei, but without politics or community (Harris 42).

And, while Naomi's position would be marginal and likely difficult in any ethnic community, it is perhaps doubly so in the Japanese-Canadian community, where, as Ken Adachi points out, generational conflict has been accentuated by the exceptional conservatism of the early immigrant generation, by the blatant discrimination the group faced, and by the second-generations' consequent remarkable eagerness to be accepted as Canadians (Adachi). All of these factors increase the tortuousness of Naomi's position, thereby enhancing her value as the narrator of a complex story and ultimately as an integrator of disparate perspectives. Naomi, like the community she represents, has experienced the full brunt of injustice. Victim of both the relocation and the loss of her mother, she has been emotionally wounded by the shock of these experiences, and by the silence surrounding them. As the novel chronicles her movement from innocence to knowledge, from silence to speech, the contradictory directions in which she is torn are symbolized by the other major characters, her *Issei* aunt, Obasan, whose "language remains underground" and her *Nissei* aunt, Emily, "B.A., M.A....a word warrior"(32) whose ability to speak out against her group's victimization is, ironically, a measure of her internalization of Canadian values and her skill with the English language.

Ultimately, though somewhat reluctantly, Naomi chooses Aunt Emily and her words over Obasan and her silence. She gradually sees the vision Emily points to in her biblically based admonition to Naomi early in the novel to "Write the vision and make it plain" (31). But Naomi feels ambivalent about this redemptive vision since she suspects that language is limited in its ability to capture truth, which is enormously complex. Kogawa

forces Naomi (and her readers) to confront this complexity--and the gap between experience and representation-- by forcing her (them) to confront the incongruous juxtaposition of several kinds of discourse--retrospective first person reminiscence, diaries, letters, newspapers, government documents--as well as the silence of her aunt and uncle. Thus the reader of *Obasan* gradually becomes aware of the dramatic irony in Aunt Emily's comment to Naomi when, after showing her a number of documents, Emily confidently asserts, "There it is in black and white. Our short, harsh history" (33).

Nevertheless, Emily's second-generation championing of justice and of language ultimately provides the vehicle for resistance: for Naomi's redemptive (third-generation) vision. To those who argue for silence and forgetting on the basis that the past is past, and "dredging up history" will not accomplish anything, Emily counters, "The past is the future" (42). Indeed, the novel itself becomes a site for a re-visioning Canada through its fusing of past, present and future, as in the following image:

All our ordinary stories are changed in time, altered as much by the present as the present is shaped by the past. Potent and pervasive as a prairie dust storm, memories and dreams seep and mingle through cracks, settling on furniture and into upholstery. Our attics and living rooms encroach on each other, deep into their invisible places (25).

Together, the various types of discourse in the novel constitute a revision of "official" history not only because they include the victim's voice, but also because they refuse a single version of events, highlighting instead the multifaceted and ambiguous nature of victimization. While clearly suggesting some complicity in their own victimization, as they allow themselves to be removed from their homes "as undemanding as dew" (112),

Kogawa also reveals the extent to which an entire community was violated, "...rendered voiceless, stripped of car, radio, camera and every means of communication, a trainload of eyes covered with mud and spittle" (112). Indeed, as at least one literary scholar has suggested, *Obasan* can be read as an elegy--a poetic lament for the death of an entire community (Merivale).

If *Obasan* is among the most poetic explorations of the victimization of a racial or ethnic minority in Canada, perhaps the most vivid exploration of the moral ambiguity that makes it difficult to distinguish victims from villains, and certainly the novel most satirically critical of the type of ethnic identity that depends on embracing victimization is Richler's *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*. The chief embodiments of this ambiguity are The Boy Wonder, the epileptic Virgil Roseboro, and Duddy himself, and their interaction with each other. As a ghetto folk hero, a second-generation St. Urbain Street boy who "made good," the Wonder is a palpable presence for Duddy from his childhood, though the Wonder doesn't actually appear until midway through the novel. Magnified and transformed by the power of storytelling, Jerry Dingleman, "The boy wonder," like Wolf Adler in *Son of a Smaller Hero*, is a chameleon. An unscrupulous drug dealer who uses the young and admiring Duddy to smuggle cocaine across the border for him, the Wonder is also "a God-fearing man" who "didn't smoke or drive his car or place bets on the Sabbath" (131). Made incredibly wealthy by various seedy deals and underworld maneuvers, reputed to be visited by "three or four girls at a time" and to have a taste for "some dirty specialties" enhanced by "incredible films imported from Europe, books of photographs, amazing statues," the Boy Wonder is nevertheless community minded, one who "remembered well his own early hardships, and ... liked to lend a helping

hand" (131). In this humanitarian spirit, the Wonder sets aside Wednesdays ("known to his inner circle as Schnorrer's Day") to listen to the stories of a series of "supplicants" seeking various kinds of favours.

But the Wonder is not just a hypocrite, or a kind of Robin Hood villain/benefactor. He is also himself a victim of polio, a cripple, whose legs were "twisted and useless" and is therefore confined to a wheelchair. However, Jerry Dingleman's misfortune turns him not only into a pitiable victim, but also into a kind of monster:

Polio wrought immense physical changes in Jerry Dingleman. At thirty he was no longer a handsome man. His shoulders and chest developed enormously and his legs dwindled to thin bony sticks. He put on lots of weight.... The bony head suddenly seemed massive. The grey inquisitor's eyes, whether hidden behind dark glasses ... or flashing under rimless ones, unfailingly led people to look over his shoulder down at the floor. His curly hair had dried.... But the most noticeable and unexplained change was in the flesh of his face. After his illness, it turned red and wet and shiny. His teeth, however, remained as white as ever and his smile was still unnervingly fresh.... The smile that somehow retained an aura of innocence made those who feared or disliked the Boy Wonder resent him all the more (133).

Thus Richler portrays The Wonder as an enigmatic presence about whom "little was known for certain" (134), a combination of "hero, villain, victim, monster," ultimately indecipherable.

Considerably less enigmatic than the Boy Wonder, Virgil Roseboro is an innocent, one whose essential goodness and devotion make him a natural target for schemers like Duddy. Paradoxically, however, his culpability lies in his innocence, which inspires evil. Being an epileptic as well makes him doubly the victim and not only the catalyst for Duddy's most depraved act in his desperate attempt to succeed, but also the chief vehicle for Richler's satire of victimized ethnicity. An aspiring poet, Virgil decides to publish a newsletter for epileptics which, with its selective use of history and heroes, or

didactic literature and emotion-laden rhetoric to rally solidarity and spark political activism, is a black parody of 'typical' discourses of ethnicity and minority status that depend for their existence on the very victimization they attempt to fight. Virgil's "The Crusader" is just such a text, with its series on "Famous Health Handicappers Through History" and its "fighting editorial" advising "health handicappers to take a leaf from the book of the negroes, Jews and homosexuals" and "organise to protect themselves," and its Personals Column, where desperate pleas for companionship bear testimony to a deep desire for community, even if it be a community of victims (269-273). However, though Richler's satiric intent is obvious, this discourse of victimization is not simply parodic. In creating space for and insight into a usually silenced position, it also encodes the ambivalence of the apologist perspective.

Duddy himself is an embodiment of this ambivalent perspective. Although one is inclined to read Duddy's declaration that "all I needed was to be born rich and I would have grown up such a fine regular guy ... a regular prince among men" (298) as humorous dramatic irony, he nevertheless embodies, a complex combination of qualities, including those of the victim and picaresque hero as well as the scoundrel. That Duddy is the latter is revoltingly clear by the end of the novel. Desperate for the \$2,200 that will finally seal his claim on the Ste. Agathe land he has been pursuing so relentlessly, and after contemplating the going price for blood and bodies, Duddy asks himself, "Was there anything valuable he could steal?" (297). Duddy then forges the signature of the now paraplegic Virgil. The victim of an accident for which Duddy is at least partially responsible, Virgil is totally dependent on this money for his livelihood. Thus, Virgil's naive admiration of Duddy's entrepreneurship, his praise that "Duddy can do anything" (304),

becomes an ironic comment on the depths of Duddy's depravity, just as Duddy's self-satisfied question, asked earlier of Yvette, "What's your opinion of Duddy Kravitz now?" (220) is laden with dramatic irony, since by the end of the novel Duddy has proven himself the equal of the Boy Wonder, horrifying and disgusting the very people he thought he would please most, Yvette, and particularly his grandfather.

Another key element in the rich irony of Duddy's ultimate "victory" is that he has won it, not only by preying on others, particularly Virgil, but also by taking advantage of the victimization of his own people, since anti-Semitism prompts the Ste. Agathe farmers to sell to Duddy, who uses Yvette as his front, rather than to Jerry Dingleman, the Jewish wheeler dealer. But if Duddy uses his group's victimization for his own ends, he too is nevertheless a victim. Despite his justified revulsion toward Duddy's methods of acquiring the land, and toward Duddy's materialistic plans for exploiting it, Duddy's *Zeyda* (grandfather), with his constant peasant's refrain that "a man without land is nobody" and his immigrant's desire for his progeny to do well, bears some responsibility for Duddy's misguided obsession. So too does Max, Duddy's jovial, storytelling father. With his admirable family-man qualities--his love for his deceased wife, his seemingly genuine parental concern for the welfare of his sons--existing alongside his shocking amorality as exemplified in his seedy career as a pimp and his constant elevation of the Boy Wonder to hero of the ghetto, Max is a caricature of Jewish fatherhood. His own distorted perceptions nurture distortions in his son, also a caricature, of the aspiring younger generation. Like the seemingly faceless and weak Wolf Adler, Max suggests ineptitude, confusion, even decay at the centre of ethnic identity--a centre that "will not hold." Duddy's obsession, his amorality, which exists alongside his sterling devotion to family, as

exemplified in his efforts to extricate his brother from a difficult situation, and in his willingness to travel to New York to help his cancer-stricken Uncle Benjy, has been nourished in Richler's portrayal by his personal and collective inheritance, and by the gap (including its generational dimension) between the immigrant ghetto and the elusive North American dream of success. And Duddy is a victim of both his inheritance and that dream.

Despite this obvious burlesquing of the immigrant experience, Richler's tone, as is frequently the case in 'insider' portrayals of immigrant and/or ethnic experience, remains ambivalent throughout Duddy's climb from ghetto boy to land owner. Indeed, in his depiction of Duddy, Richler projects some of the same admiration that Max infuses into his tales of the Boy Wonder. Despite his seemingly boundless capacity for exploitation, Duddy moves through Richler's fictional landscape with a kind of picaresque charm (Wainwright 1981). This is apparent for example, in Duddy's adventures as a waiter, in which he shines as a kind of topsy turvy Jewish version of the Algerian hero. It is also apparent in the confrontation between Duddy and his rich uncle, Benjy, who has chosen the genteel Englishman as his model, rather than the underworld operator from the ethnic ghetto. Benjy accuses Duddy of being "a pusherke ... a little Jew Boy on the make. Guys like you make me sick and ashamed." When Duddy counters with the impassioned comment that "You lousy intelligent people, you lying sons-of-bitches with your books and your socialism and your sneers, you give me a long pain in the ass" (240), one feels Richler's ambivalent sympathy with Duddy for his perverse honesty. In this scene, Richler not only emphasizes the complexity of his characters and of the aspects of group identity they represent, but also dissects the ethnic and generational sensibility produced by the dynamics of

the vertical mosaic, what one of Richler's characters calls the "ghetto mentality" (223).

Each pose--Uncle Benjy's as the imitative colonial sycophant and Duddy's as the amoral hustler--is a reaction to the paradoxical but potent juxtaposition of the limitless possibilities in New World fantasies, with the limits, both tangible and intangible, imposed by the vertical mosaic. Like characters in many other ethnic minority fictions, both Benjy and Duddy must pay a price for whatever degree of "success" their respective strategies effect and that price involves an inter-related loss of their integrity and their connection with community. In terms of the generational schema, though in fact third-generation, Duddy, at the symbolic level, has remained (like his Uncle Benjy), at the second-generation position, unable to forge the spiritual link between old and new, which is the hallmark of the redemptive third-generation. Neither has effectively de colonized the position they occupy as members of an ethnic minority in Canada's vertical mosaic.

The Illusion/Reality Polarity

In addition to exploring the subtle symbiosis between victims and oppressors in the struggle to realize new world dreams and the way in which the dynamics of this process obscure the distinction between the two, writers who depict immigrant and/or ethnic experience in Canada as 'insiders' also explore the related and equally ambiguous dynamics between illusion and reality, laying bare the particular susceptibility of the "ghetto mentality" to blurred perception. The dramatic irony so often underlying the plot in such fictions, like the ironic tone that often dominates them, depends on and highlights the gap between illusion and reality, surface and essence which the immigrant and/or ethnic protagonist fails to see, often until it is too late, sometimes never.

Such dramatic irony is central, both structurally and thematically to *Son of a Smaller Hero*, in which the characters, (including minor ones such as the assimilated Goldenbergs whose seemingly idyllic suburban routines mask dark traumas, and major ones, such as Noah's grandfather, Melech Adler, whose stern patriarchy hides an old world love affair), lead lives filled with self delusion. And of course the novel's central event, the supposed heroic death of Wolf Adler bears ironic testimony to the power of myth and tradition to transform a private illusion into a public one that then further nourishes private deception. This dynamic and ironic interaction between illusion and reality is also central to *The Apprenticeship*, in which Duddy, despite Richler's ambivalent portrayal of him, is ultimately the butt of bitter dramatic irony that reveals him as incapable of perceiving the nature of his actions. When he triumphantly surveys his land at the end of the novel, Duddy, in his driven pursuit of his grandfather's pastoral vision, has become an agent of destruction: not "a somebody" as he had intended, but a man beyond community, a nobody.

In *Under the Ribs of Death*, John Marlyn also employs irony to dramatize the interplay between illusion and reality as a powerful shaper of immigrant and ethnic experience. In the novel as a whole, as much as in the philosophical argument Marlyn portrays between Sandor's father and the barber, Mr. Schiller, "the question of the nature of reality is under discussion" (127). And ironically, it is Sandor who asserts in this discussion that "I just believe in things the way they are" (128). As John Roberts points out in an article discussing Marlyn's use of irony, Sandor must "deceive himself" over and over again since the price for the success he craves is that he "abandon his organic identity."

But deception is only possible in a world where differing versions of truth exist or can be created.... Irony is intrinsic to a problematic reality.... It embodies a contradiction between the human desire for ultimate truth and the realization that no truth exists... Although Marlyn utilizes irony to illuminate this world of shifting perspectives, he does so not to prove that reality is unknowable, but to warn against the pitfalls in the process of unmasking it (Roberts 41).

Sandor's experience in "unmasking" a series of inter-related illusions is, not surprisingly, the process of his growing up, of his journeying from an innocence that makes it difficult for him to decode the signs and events that shape the world in which he moves, to a knowledge, or at least wariness, that comes from his having been scorched by the infernal flame that he finds at the core of what he thought to be paradise.

As a child, unable to see beneath surfaces, Sandor assumes that changing his name will obliterate his ethnicity, just as he naively supposes that his Uncle Janos "is a foreigner no longer" (79) once he is transformed by a haircut and new clothes. Similarly, he assumes that his friend Eric, being "rich and English" cannot be anything but happy, despite his eyes that were "an old man's, grave and deep set and sad" (70). The sharpness of the contrast Sandor encounters between his world of Henry Street and Eric's wealthy suburb unsettles somewhat his sense of reality. Contemplating the pastoral expanses of Eric's garden, Sandor reflects that "In a little while it would all be over ... and he would be back on Henry Avenue. In a few days the things he had seen here would grow unreal and he would begin to wonder if he had imagined them" (67).

But after secretly scrutinizing the splendid interior of the home of one of his employers, Sandor decides that "This was it ... the real thing. Comfort, wealth and beauty" (68). And this contact with what Sandor decides is "the real thing" is, for him, a kind of epiphany that solidifies his previously

inchoate longing into an obsessive commitment to realizing the North American dream of material success. He is immediately drawn into "dreaming of the future ... a future now so immeasurably widened and filled with things to possess" (68). He glimpses only vaguely the barriers to achieving his goal: "It was true, a vast gulf separated this world from his, but he had spanned it: in one stride had crossed over to taste, to see and forever invest his dreams with the vision of it. He laughed at the magnitude of his achievement" (74).

As Sandor journeys toward this dream, this new world paradise symbolized for him by Eric's garden, he continues to be deceived by surfaces: Nagy seems to him to be the epitome of success because he has a business—he works at a desk in an office, unlike his father, a janitor; later, he is "lured by a dream of splendid affluence" (in which he sees himself "living next door to Eric") into thinking that his family could all be happy if his uncle married for money a woman he does not love. But Sandor experiences the shattering of each of these and other related illusions until he is, ironically, back once again on Henry Street, shorn of his modest financial gain, and of his faith in the dream of success. Though the novel's ending is sufficiently ambiguous to leave one wondering about the degree to which Sandor has "unmasked reality," it seems clear that, unlike Duddy Kravitz, he has gained some insight from his journey, that he is at least beginning to suspect that reality is somehow to be found in familial and communal relationships rather than in a "success" that is measured in possessions. Thus he seems to be at least on his way from a second- to a third-generation position.

Like Marlyn's Sandor, Frank Paci's second-generation Italian characters are compelled to grapple with competing, and therefore problematic realities, and "encounter pitfalls in the process of unmasking" truth, or at least some

workable version of it. Paci depicts this process with a sensitive, gentle irony that allows the reader to see through his characters' self deception, while sympathizing with them. For example, all three of the children in *The Italians* --Lorianna, Aldo and Bill--are seduced by illusions; as a result, each of them develops a distorted, unbalanced personality. All seek to escape some aspect of life, usually non-material, that they find difficult. Lorianna seeks to escape her own sexuality, despite her marriage to the passionate Lorenzo, through a highly personal religious asceticism. Aldo, too, seeks refuge from the strain of interpersonal relationships including sexual ones, and from his physical limitations, in the priesthood. Bill, on the other hand, is drawn to the dream of being a hockey star for the NHL partly to escape intellectual demands, but primarily to escape his Italian family. Indeed, for all three, the "burden" of their problematized ethnicity is a key element in the nature of the illusions that seduce them and in their need to escape. Aldo, for example, "Frail from birth ... had shunned the team sports that served as a melting pot for the Italian and Canadian kids in his neighborhood.... It had been difficult for him to make friends with the Canadian kids and the Italian kids taunted him" (Paci 62).

As well, for all of them, the competing realities in their lives are the products of the various contrasting binary patterns that are intrinsic to the immigrant experience: the gap between old world and new, European parent and North American child, the English language and the Italian, and between the various geographic spaces and socioeconomic levels within the vertical mosaic. Their escapes from these tensions prove illusory for all three of them. Typical is Bill who finds that even though "He thought he had escaped their (his parents') world for the time being by imagining himself doing all sorts of incredible feats in national league games ... it always managed to

intrude" (49). They must all ultimately face both their personal inadequacies and the nature of the discursive world in which they exist before they can "unmask reality" and construct an appropriate identity for themselves.

For Paci, in *The Italians*, as in *The Father*, the unmasking consists in coming to understand and practice the principle of the golden mean, of being able to avoid crippling extremes that result from cutting off one part of oneself from another, whether it be by divorcing mind or body from heart, public identity from private, or ethnic identity from Canadian identity. In *The Father* Stephen "wants to understand the real world," but he assumes that he will find it in logic, not poetry, the mind, not the heart (110). The novel traces the growth of his capacity to feel and understand a broader reality. As Father Sarlo tells him, "the longest yard in existence" is the distance from "forehead to chest" (94) and the journey required to bridge this distance and the related distances between the various polarities that fragment immigrant and ethnic experience is, for Paci, the journey from illusion to reality and from an identity in crisis to an integrated sense of self in relation to place.

Conclusion

The "vertical mosaic" profiled by the research of John Porter and other social scientists since is a pervasive presence in fiction by insiders about immigrant and ethnic experience. It infuses the fictional urban landscape, complex, tense and above all, hierarchical, that is created again and again in this literature: it informs the crisis of identity that the immigrant characters and their children and grandchildren almost inevitably experience as they discover that "moving up" often requires them to significantly modify, even to attempt to erase their ethnic identity. The vertical mosaic is also evoked

via the fiction's preoccupation with and shifting assessment of victims and oppressors, heroes and villains, and via the broad gap between illusion and reality that the characters struggle to bridge in the process of adapting, both physically and spiritually, to Canada.

This fictional portrayal of Canada's "configuration of domination" can be seen as a site of the post-colonial struggle of various "dominated groups" to represent marginalized experience and to appropriate English by infusing it with new words, new "cadences" (Lee 1974) and by subverting to varying degrees two macro narratives of North American identity: the journey and the garden. This "writing back" to the (mainstream, Anglo-Canadian) empire is effected through representing but eventually disrupting a series of binary patterns (old world/new world and success/failure being the primary ones) that are woven onto a three-generational frame, each of which represents a different degree of comfort, self assertion, and ultimately of integrity in an expanded/re-shaped discursive space.

The texts produced by this re-writing of the immigrant and/or ethnic story by no means constitute a simple, unambiguous victim's complaint. Rather, they can be read collectively as a critique, at times somewhat ambivalent, of the rags-to-riches mythology that was a strong strand in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century American culture, and to a considerable degree, in Canadian culture as well (Smith 1978). Whether with a humorous tone or a profoundly disillusioned one, insiders who fictionalize the urban immigrant and/or ethnic experience use irony to distance readers from their characters' struggles and at the same time to bring them scorchingly close to them as they dissect the dynamics of upward mobility in Canada and the nature of "success," ultimately rejecting it, though not

without some regret, on the grounds that not only is the price too high, but also, the reward is illusory.

By seizing the formerly colonized subject position, depicting the "vertical mosaic" from a perspective other than that of the genteel upper rungs and dramatizing its power to "make or mar" the lives of individuals, these texts have brought a new and transformative dimension to Canadian literature. However, they seem in some important ways oddly congruent with those produced by "mainstream" writers in their portrayal of divided loyalties and the moral ambiguities of victimization and in their ambivalent rejection of the dream of material success associated with American culture. Perhaps this similarity is the result of their both being projects of resistance that explore the nuances of post-colonial space.

For example, like Margaret Atwood in *Surfacing* (1972), John Marlyn in *Under the Ribs of Death* portrays a sensibility habituated to defining itself against a more powerful cultural ethos that it both admires and despises, because its negative identity depends on it, while its emergent positive identity, constantly in history's shadow, must (like Richler's Noah Alder in *Son of a Smaller Hero*) struggle mightily to gain "some knowledge" of itself "that (is) independent of others." Clearly a "literature existing at an interface of two cultures," fiction in Canada about ethnic minority experience by insiders can be understood, like Canadian literature as a whole, as a post-colonial literature, having "emerged out of the experience of colonization and asserted (itself) by foregrounding the tension with the imperial power, and by emphasizing (its) differences from the assumptions of the imperial centre" (Ashcroft et. al. 2). Paradoxically, in portraying the divided souls of "ethnic" immigrants, and the painful struggles of their progeny to find a place for themselves, this fiction foregrounds many tensions emanating from the

"neither/nor territory" of white settler ("Second World") discursive space
(Slemon, *Unsettling* 30), albeit from a different location within it.

CHAPTER THREE

Fictionalizing Space for the 'Other': Men, Women and the Ethnic Ghetto

In the preceding two chapters, I have argued that binary patterns constitute the fundamental structural frameworks for ethnic minority fictions in Canada, that these binary patterns (and their disruption) are central to and illustrative of the way that these fictions have worked as sites of resistance, as mediums of cultural transformation. I have also argued that post colonial theory, in conjunction with a wide range of Canadian scholarship, especially Canadian ethnic studies, provides a particularly useful framework for appreciating these complex processes and their representation in ethnic minority fiction. In this chapter, I develop this argument further by highlighting one of the major narrative strategies of resistance employed by second/third generation writers--a strategy which I am calling, for want of a better phrase, "making space for the 'other.'"

This strategy, which problematizes physical and social space at several discursive levels, endowing particular territories with literal and metonymic significance, and ultimately with transformative power, is one that, in post colonial terms, works to abrogate and appropriate dominant discursive practice. That is, this space-making strategy constitutes (in varying degrees in different texts) a "refusal of the categories of the imperial culture" and an attempt to make the imperial language "'bear the burden'" of one's own cultural experience" (Ashcroft et. al, 38-9).

As I argue in Chapter Two, representations of the ethnic ghetto play a central role in the representation of ethnic minority experience, and in particular serve as metonymic evocations of the complex dynamics of the "vertical mosaic." In this chapter I analyze this role in more detail, arguing

that the presence in a text of an insider's evocation of the ethnic ghetto (arguably the very emblem of marginalization) is significant, not only as a measure of a particular text's "alterity" (Soderlind 8), but as a vehicle for de colonization--for claiming space for the ethnic "other." And further, I argue that there is some evidence that while the ghetto functions in this way in the work of a great number of second/third generation ethnic writers, it is often handled differently by male and female writers, and that this difference is both noteworthy and suggestive.

As I have already noted, colonialism provides a useful point of departure for this discussion, since historically it provided the broad framework for European/North American interface, and thus for the immigrant journey. And it is useful because it provides the metaphor of centres and margins that is central to the narrative of immigrant experience, both male and female. That it is a metaphor particularly evocative of female immigrant experience is, I will argue, a function of that experience often having been characterized by what at least one Canadian scholar has called "double jeopardy", or double vulnerability to being marginalized (colonized) on the basis of gender as well as ethnicity (McMullen, 1981).¹

Further, post colonial analysis, with its stress on the dynamics of displacement and, ultimately, on the resistance it inspires, is potentially a particularly fruitful illuminator of female experience and of the double jeopardy potentially inherent in female immigrant experience. Not surprisingly, some

¹ See also K. Holst Petersen and A. Rutherford, eds., *A Double Colonization: Colonial & Post-Colonial Women's Writing*. Aarhus: Dangaroo, 1985 for a similar argument from a clearly postcolonial perspective. W.D. Ashcroft has also argued for a stronger connection between feminist and postcolonial theorizing and practice. Others have cautioned about the dangers of too much conflation. See, for example, Sara Suleri, "Woman Skin Deep: Feminism and the Postcolonial Condition," *Critical Inquiry* 18, 1992, 756-69, in which she argues that allowing the postcolonial framework to stretch too far in the direction of becoming "a free-floating metaphor for cultural embattlement" (759) as it does in the hands of white academic feminists undercuts its power to evoke the realities of "third world" oppression, particularly of women.

feminist and post colonial theorists have seen the mutual relevance of their analytical tools (Ashcroft, "Intersecting Marginalities", 1989), since women "...share with colonized races and peoples an intimate experience of the politics of oppression and repression....", and both the discourses of Feminism and post-colonialism "...seek to reinstate the marginalized in the face of the dominant" (Ashcroft et al., 174, 175). Writers marginalized by immigrant and/or ethnic status, by gender, or by both, must use the very same tools of language and narrative that have constructed and fundamentally constitute the structures that oppress them. "Women, like post-colonial peoples, have had to construct a language of their own when their only available 'tools' are those of the 'colonizer'" (Ashcroft, et al. 174; Petersen et. al.).

As well, we learn from both post-colonial and feminist writers and theorists about the nature of the literary strategies characteristically employed in this struggle to transform the colonizer's language and narrative forms into one's own. Work by both feminist and post-colonialist writers and critics suggests that the essence of this "de colonizing stance" expressed as literary strategy is perhaps best captured in two overlapping terms--subversion and pluralism. Portrayals of the ethnic ghetto in many insider fictions of immigrant and ethnic experience act as vehicles for inscribing both of these processes.

De colonizing the North End

Among the contributions that fiction writers have made to our imaginations, both individual and collective, are a number of evocations of place so compelling that they have, paradoxically, become more real to many people as fictional landscapes than as actual ones. Thomas Hardy's Wessex country, Mark Twain's Hannibal, William Faulkner's Yoknapatowpha County are such places for readers of English and American literature.

Readers of Canadian literature would certainly add others to a list of "real" fictional places, such as Stephen Leacock's *Mariposa*, Margaret Laurence's *Manawaka* and Mordecai Richler's *St. Urbain Street*. And, although not a great deal has been written about its depiction in fiction, these readers might also add to such a list Winnipeg's "North End" prior to the Second World War, not so much because of its re-creation in the work of one writer, but because it emerges from the work of a number of Canadian writers, particularly those interested in portraying minority ethnic experience.

Indeed, one might see the North End as a very significant spot in the Canadian literary landscape, a kind of archetypal place in Woodcock's "land of invisible ghettos," its various depictions the imaginative products of inevitable tensions in a new and multi-ethnic society. Upon a closer look, some of these fictions can also be seen as attempts to deny or to create legitimate space for newcomers within the nation's discursive structures as well as its economy and society. Interestingly, those written by women also interrelate legitimizing the immigrant and ethnic "other" with engendering space for the female "other."

While it is perilous to generalize from limited and complex data, one can see an interesting pattern of difference both among male writers and among female writers and between them with regard to their depiction of the North End ethnic ghetto and of the spaces within it that they carve out for women. Both male and female writers use it as a site for combining apology and social critique; however, male writers tend to shape the North End into a dualistic combat zone and women into embodiments of either its best or its worst qualities; female writers, to varying degrees, shape it into a warm, nurturant, and ultimately powerfully syncretic space wherein limiting and

repressive dualities can be creatively shattered, thereby making spaces that include rather than exclude those "othered" by rigid concepts of ethnicity and/or gender.²

It is perhaps not surprising that Winnipeg's North End would emerge as a symbolic space in the portrayal of immigrant and/or ethnic life in Canada and of inter-ethnic tensions. Strategically located in the middle of the continent, Winnipeg early became an important centre in the fur trade, and later a railroad centre and gateway to westward expansion. Developing at the heart of Canada's railway and immigration boom, Winnipeg itself boomed, experiencing a period of growth and prosperity between the 1890s and 1914 unequaled in Canadian urban development (Artibise 1951). Attracting a substantial number of the many immigrants who came to Canada during this formative period in the history of the Canadian West, Winnipeg was a microcosm of Canada's development in the first half of the twentieth century, of both its potential and its problems.

One of the most serious of these problems "was the conflict of values between the charter groups and the immigrants, many of whom were Slavs and Jews who did not fit into the Anglo-Canadian mold and as a result experienced overt discrimination." This conflict was concretely expressed in the city's urban landscape, which "was divided ... in two: the 'North End' was

² See Elaine Showalter *A Literature of their Own: British Women Novelists from Bronte to Lessing*, particularly chapter 11, "Beyond the Female Aesthetic" for an enlightening discussion of the problem inevitably raised by focusing on "an aesthetic that champion[s] the feminine consciousness and assert[s] its superiority to the public, rationalist masculine world. At the same time that it promised women an alternative source of experience and self esteem, however, the female aesthetic uncannily legitimized...old stereotypes" (298). See also Brownwen Levy (1985), "Women Experiment Down Under: Reading the Difference," *Kunapipi* 7/2-3: 171. Mary Eagleton discusses similar issues in *Feminist Literary Theory: A Reader* (1986), Oxford: Basic Blackwell. While acknowledging the problem these critics highlight, I read the female depiction of the North End, particularly that of Adele Wiseman in *Crackpot*, not as one that illustrates old stereotypes about female writing, but one that challenges them by asserting the positive power and legitimacy of a female vision at a very deep, metaphysical level.

the home of most of the city's Slavs and Jews; the prosperous and politically dominant Anglo-Saxons were concentrated in the W(est) and S(outh)" (Artibise 1951).

Clearly, the connections between this socio-historical reality and the depiction of the North End in the work of ethnic writers are complex and indirect. At the same time, we know that discursive practice reflects and reveals social and political power structures (Hall; Foucault; Said, *Orientalism*, *Culture*). These hierarchies implicitly inform the ways in which Winnipeg's North End is portrayed in the several fictions under study here as a central vehicle for both inscribing and subverting the binary structural and thematic patterns identified in Chapter One. Together, these fictions make of the ghetto a paradoxical symbol of both confinement and possibility in the struggle of the "Other," both ethnic and female, to find a place in Canadian society and culture.

As a fictional creation, the North End has been rendered in a variety of seemingly contradictory ways as a vehicle for various kinds of social criticism and as a means of both closing off and opening up new discursive spaces. Such is the case with one of the earliest "outsider" versions of the North End, that provided by Ralph Connor (Charles Gordon) in his novel, *The Foreigner* (1909). Though a moderate voice in his day (Freisen), Connor very definitely speaks from within the discourse of the Anglo-Canadian nativist male mainstream, creating from that position a North End that is dark, seamy, violent, primitive--very much a Social Problem in need of the ministrations of the enlightened Anglo-Saxon race (Mott; Palmer, *Patterns*; Craig 32-46). Connor describes a "Galician" wedding to suggest the vast gulf that separates the ethnic North from the non-ethnic (that is, Anglo-Canadian) South Winnipeg:

Meantime, while respectable Winnipeg lay snugly asleep under snow-covered roofs and smoking chimneys, while belated revellers and travelers were making their way through white, silent streets and avenues of snow-laden trees to homes where reigned love and peace and virtue, in the North End and in the foreign colony the festivities in connection with Anka's wedding were drawing to a close in sordid drunken dance and song and in sanguinary fighting ... foul and fetid men stood packed close, drinking while they could (87).

In this and in similar evocations of the depravity contained within the boundaries of the ethnic ghetto, Connor constructs a North End "colony" that both symbolizes and helps to create the vast distance he believes separates the Slav and the Anglo-Saxon, between whose "points of view stretched generations of moral development" (87). Connor's North End is clearly constructed around a "manichean dualism" and in this regard, despite the Anglo-centrism of his dualism, it constitutes a prototype for the later depictions by male ethnic writers. But, in emphasizing distance, negative difference, and potential threat, Connor's depiction of the North End, more than later ones by ethnic minority writers, becomes a rhetorical device--a way of vividly laying out a problem in such a way as to call for a particular solution. He does this through his missionary character, Mr. Brown, when the latter asserts that "these people here (i.e., in the North End) exist as an undigested foreign mass. They must be taught our ways of thinking and living, or it will be a mighty bad thing for us in Western Canada" (255).

Connor also presents his solution by depicting the old world of his ethnic characters as wholly negative, something whose traces must be virtually erased. Ironically, their new lives are to be built upon the old-world inheritance of the Anglo-Celtic characters, as symbolized at the end of *The Foreigner* by Kalman's marriage to a Scottish heiress. Such marriages, common in a variety of forms in fiction about immigrant and/or ethnic

experience, will, in Connor's fictional landscape, ultimately eliminate ethnicity and the problematic ghetto that embodies it.³ Thus, Connor's North End is a vehicle for social commentary, and a means of barring non-British ethnicity from the psychic and cultural spaces of full legitimacy. By defining success for immigrants as denunciation and rebirth, Connor attempts to control the space they can occupy: their past selves must be cast aside and forgotten. They must assume a new identity, the superior "Anglo-Saxon" one.

Writing many years later and from perspectives very different from Connor's, a number of second/third-generation ethnic writers have also fashioned the North End into a fictional vehicle for social criticism and a means of making space for themselves in the Canadian cultural landscape. In so doing, they have together, as apologists for their respective groups, made the North End a kind of emblem of their displacement, marginality, and ambivalence, or in postcolonial terms, a site of resistance.

In the work of such ethnic writers as John Marlyn, Adele Wiseman, Maara Haas, and Ed Kleiman, evocations of the North End and its place in the lives of their characters are among the chief means of developing the fundamentally binary patterns that underlie their fiction. Their fictional ghettos locate and make concrete the interplay of tensions inherent in the polarities of old world/new world, success/failure, identity/disintegration, revelation/concealment, forgetting/remembering, illusion/reality, and integration/resistance, that to varying degrees shape and animate their narratives.

³ The notion of ethnicity implied here is one that defines it as "other," "heathen" rather than as simply "a sense of peoplehood." The latter definition would, of course, make the Anglo-Canadians Connor depicts as ethnic as his Slavs.

One can see the interplay of these polarities in John Marlyn's *Under the Ribs of Death* in which the reader finds at least two contrasting versions of the North End. The version that seems at first to dominate is that of the main character, Sandor Hunyadi, who, as the son of Hungarian immigrants and a child of the North End, sees it as a blighted wasteland. The oppressive significance that Sandor attaches to the neighbourhood is suggested in the very first image the reader encounters, that of a lonely young Sandor unhappily enmeshed in the sights, sounds, and smells of deprivation:

The streets were quiet now. His footsteps beat a lonely tattoo on the wooden sidewalk. The wind behind him ruffled his hair. Above him the lights went on, and over the face of Henry Avenue, half-hidden the moment before by soft, fraudulent shadows, there sprang into view an endless grey expanse of mouldering ruin (17).

The reader also learns almost immediately that Sandor already views his neighborhood negatively, particularly in relation to the wealthier South End of the city when, to assuage his disappointment over the humble supper awaiting him, he imagines himself "the way he would be when he was a man sitting in the lobby of the Hotel, bright button shoes on his feet, his hat and cane on a table nearby--rich and well fed and at ease there in one of the great leather chairs" (17).

That Sandor views the gulf between these sharply contrasting spaces in terms of both ethnicity and wealth is also very clear. As if a deliberate mirror image of Connor's urban geography in *The Foreigner*, Sandor's North End has taught him about the connection between wealth and ethnicity, a painful lesson that induces him to beg his father to change their name so that they can be like the "English ... the only people who count.... Their fathers got all the best jobs. They're the only ones nobody ever calls foreigners" (24). The North End also fosters in him a passionate desire to escape from "the dirty

clutter of the street he lived on ... crawling with pale, spindly kids ... and the battered houses with the scabrous walls and the shingles dropping and the walls dirt-stained and rain-streaked" (24) into the world of the "English" far away in another part of the city. When he does travel there to mow lawns in a world of beauty, wealth, and ease, Sandor explains his journey as being one "into a picture in one of his childhood books, past the painted margin to a land that lay smiling under a friendly spell, where the sun always shone and the clean-washed tint of sky and child and garden would never fade; where one could walk but on tip-toe, and look and look but never touch, and never speak to break the enchanted hush" (64).

The pastoral imagery Sandor uses to describe the South End of the city, where he imagines everyone he sees is "rich, English and happy" contrasts sharply with the disease imagery that permeates his descriptions of the North End, whose buildings seem to him "like a silent herd of monstrous beasts stricken with some unnamable disease, slowly dying as they stood there, their members rotting and falling from them" (74). Given this profoundly bifurcated sense of his surroundings, and his relationship to them, it is not surprising that Sandor should be "seized" by "something stronger than envy" (66)--an overwhelming desire that fuels his intense determination to "grow up and leave all this ... leave it behind him forever" (17).

But there is yet another dichotomy in Sandor's sense of place; his own positive feelings, however muted, about his family and friends occasionally colour his vision of the North End in more roseate hues. Perhaps the most striking example of this is his reaction to the party his family gives in honour of his Uncle Janos's arrival from Hungary. Sandor looks on "in astonishment" at the ways in which the drab Hunyadi home has been transformed by the Hunyadi geranium, whose "blood-red blossoms gave an

air of festivity to the room"; "the strains of an accordion"; the people of all ages from the neighborhood talking, laughing, and obviously enjoying themselves; the dancing of his uncle and his parents who "did not merely dance" but seemed to fly, "their feet (hardly touching) the ground"; and by the food, "savoury and varied and as spicy as an adventure, rich with the treasured cooking-lore of the whole of Europe" (87-89).

This positive image of the North End, one in which his ancestral culture is vibrant, relevant, and the ethnic ghetto is not a decaying prison, but a warm, communal home, one that nurtures genuinely creative human forces, is represented in large measure by Sandor's mother, and later his wife, Mary, and by the humanism of his father. Sandor, who regards the latter as ineffectual, glimpses this North End only fleetingly. Marlyn uses Sandor's blindness to create the chief vehicle for his social commentary: dramatic irony that allows the reader to see what Sandor is usually incapable of seeing, making the South End a negative counterpoint, a symbol of all that is phony and ultimately destructive.

Thus, *Under the Ribs of Death* embodies two visions of the North End, thereby suggesting, as John Roberts has pointed out, that the novel is concerned with portraying an ethnic sensibility as one that must grapple with competing versions of reality. And, as Roberts also argues, Marlyn's use of irony is appropriate, perhaps inevitable, since "irony is intrinsic to a problematic reality" like that of the displaced immigrant (Roberts 14). One might see female experience as similarly problematic since it could be argued that to be female is to be "Othered" by male-centred social structures and institutions, including language itself. Kay Schaffer, for example, drawing in particular on Simone de Beauvoir's pioneering analysis, suggests that Western culture (and its languages) places man in the centre and woman on

the margins as "other": "The assumption that the masculine (man, Empire, Civilization) has an unquestioned God-given right to subdue or cultivate the feminine (woman, Earth, Nature) and appropriate the feminine to masculine domination is a constant structuring principle of Western discourse" (Schaffer 82).

Also intrinsic to the immigrant's--and perhaps the female's--experience of "competing realities" is a kind of dual vision, the inevitable outgrowth of a sensibility shaped by awareness of a gap between there and here, past and present self, language and meaning. Out of this dual vision come the recurring polarities that shape fictions of ethnicity (Soderlind 5,6); portrayals of the ethnic ghetto are closely linked to the interplay of these polarities. The gap between the positive and negative versions of the North End ghetto provides the basis for the male *bildungsroman* structure of the novel, thereby combining the male coming-of-age story with the characteristic binary structure of ethnic fiction (New 242). Sandor comes of age in the bi-polar space between competing versions of old and new worlds. The measure of his maturity at the end of the novel is the degree to which he can see the communal aspects of the ethnic ghetto in a positive light: the degree to which he is able to remember his past, using it to integrate his own personal identity and to transform the overly materialistic, and therefore unbalanced, new world in which he lives.

Although he does not develop fully the idea or the characters that project it, Marlyn also suggests that this coming of age for Sandor (and perhaps for the emerging nation of Canada), involving as it does the integration of the polarities warring within him, must ultimately balance the aggressively male, Darwinian vision embedded in the capitalist society wherein he longs to find a niche, with a more cooperative, nurturant, female

vision. Imaged as both a scabrous inferno and a warm refuge, the North End becomes a central symbol of both the need for this resolution and the difficulty, particularly for the second-generation male, of effecting it.

In the ironic twist at the end of the novel, when the world that Sandor has aspired to is in ruins and the only positive things in his life are those represented by family and community, one can see that Marlyn has used the contrasting versions of the ghetto to critique the prevailing North American mythology of immigration and ethnicity, turning topsy-turvy the twin assumptions that success in North American terms is worth the price it exacts from the immigrant in concealment and loss, and that the new world has much more to offer than the old. This comment would have been made more forcefully had Marlyn's female characters been fashioned with more clarity; neither Mrs. Hunyadi nor Mary emerges as a fully realized character. Nevertheless, Sandor's ultimate failure, Marlyn suggests, does not lie in his inability to leave the North End, to achieve a seamless assimilation, but rather in his inability to resist the forces pressuring him to do so because he cannot discriminate between the substantial and the superficial.

Another version of the North End emerges from Ed Kleiman's *The Immortals*. Though it is a cycle of interconnected short stories rather than a novel, and it suffers somewhat from being infused with an overdose of nostalgia for lost youth, *The Immortals*, like *Under the Ribs of Death* is a kind of *bildungsroman*, chronicling the development of not just one male character, but of a whole generation of North Enders, and of the North End itself. Although one can read in his portrayal of the North End the ambivalence toward both his group and the world outside that is characteristic of the second-generation position outlined in Chapter Two (Sollors 658), Kleiman does not use the ethnic ghetto to the same extent that

Marlyn does as a vehicle for social criticism. Rather, he uses it to explore the personal impact of the complex relationship between individual and community. In so doing, he at once dissects and celebrates the complex relationship between individual and collective identities, while at the same time lamenting the transience of individuals and communities. Paradoxically, he suggests, albeit at times in a tone that some readers would find overly sentimental, the enduring influence of the North End on the lives of his characters.

The North End portrayed in *The Immortals* (1980), like that in *Under the Ribs of Death*, is a world of struggle that strongly motivates its inhabitants to "succeed"; unlike the latter, it also engenders a fierce pride, and is a place much more loved than hated. Kleiman's depiction rejects the centre's definitions of marginalized space, embracing it as lovable, even superior to those valorized by the dominant discourse. This affection and loyalty for the neighbourhood, which might well be compared with the nationalist position Said and others describe, is apparent in a number of Kleiman's stories, particularly "A Sunday Afternoon with the North End Buccaneers" and "The Immortals."

The former, which begins the collection, tells of the youthful exploits of a gang of bar mitzvah-aged boyhood friends, who spend their free hours either playing Monopoly or exploring the neighbourhood, attempting to assert their supremacy over the South Side Henderson gang. The narrator notes that the latter "may have been the toughest in the city, but we were from the North End, and for sheer cheek, we were the city's masters." Its underlying ethos a masculine one of battle and conquest, the story is imbued with a sharp sense of the North End as a distinct entity locked in struggle with the South Side. The highlight of the afternoon for the "buccaneers" is

defeating the Henderson gang on the latter's own territory, a victory the narrator Michael savours as a glowing reminder of carefree days, coming of age, and rare triumph:

It had been a grand excursion, a splendid afternoon, one of the most victorious forays into enemy territory we'd ever undertaken. With oars pulling steadily we moved triumphantly back up the river. While behind us, as we sailed off into glory, we left our enemies, not only licking their sores, but wailing and gnashing their teeth too (19).

However, that the triumph is short lived is suggested, not in the story's plot, since the Henderson gang remain defeated in the story, but in its mock epic tone, evident in Michael's comment about the buccaneers' invulnerability:

As we rowed back toward the dockyard, the trees on either bank seemed to bow down and the sun was a golden crown in the heavens. So invulnerable did we feel that when Gordie marched from the prow of the boat to the stem ... we almost expected to see him go marching off across the surface of the water (19).

The transience of their victory is also suggested in the story's conclusion. The boys end their glorious afternoon playing Monopoly once again, dreaming "of one day entering the grown-up world of time clocks, lunch boxes and secondhand furniture, the no-nonsense business world where the arithmetic of feet and inches and dollars and cents was in deadly earnest, where properties were traded and rents raised in cutthroat competition" (23). In this description of the rather tawdry, circumscribed nature of their dreams, which suggests the limitations of a North End victory, Kleiman comes as close as he ever does to criticizing the larger dynamics that produced the ethnic ghetto and continue to perpetuate it.

The title story, "The Immortals," presents an even more explicit description of the gap between the two poles of the city, and in so doing,

explores the interrelated polarities of success/failure, integration/ resistance, and remembering/forgetting that under gird Kleiman's fiction. The story focuses these tensions on the mock battleground of a football field. Though just an exhibition game, it was one that mattered because it "was a contest between the North and South Ends of the city. And that was no small matter" (49). The ethnic, class, and political dimensions of this contest are clearly delineated:

The North End consisted mainly of immigrants from Eastern Europe, labouring classes, small foreign-language newspapers, watch-repair shops, a Jewish theatrical company, a Ukrainian dance troupe, small choirs, tap-dancing schools, orchestral groups, chess clubs and more radical political thinkers per square block than Soviet Russia had known before the Revolution. The South End--or River Heights, as it is more fashionably called--was basically what that revolution had been against. The mayor, most of the aldermen, the chairman of the school board and many of the civic employees--not the street sweepers, of course--lived in River Heights (50).

Also apparent in the narrator's description is a palpable contempt for River Heights as an embodiment of all that is superficial, illusory, pretentious. In fact, his description can be read as a startling revision of Sandor's rendering of the North End as inferno, the South End as paradise:

Another way of distinguishing between the two parts of the city is by looking at the street names. In the North End, you'll find such names as Selkirk Avenue, Euclid Street, Aberdeen, Dufferin--names steeped in history, names which suggest the realm of human endeavor, anguish, accomplishment. But if you look at the street names in River Heights, what you'll find, with few exceptions, are such names as Ash Street, Elm, Oak, Willow. Vast expanses of velvet lawns, well-treed boulevards--the area looks like a garden, a retreat from the toil and anguish everywhere visible in the North End. The two cultures meet downtown, where the South End gentry immediately head for the managerial offices, and the North End rabble file past the company clocks with their time cards. After work countless numbers of expensive cars sweep grandly across the Maryland bridge back into Eden, while street cars and

buses pass northward beneath the C.P.R. subway into a grim bleak underworld of steel fences, concrete walls, locked doors, and savage dogs that seem capable of looking in three directions at once (50).

As well as being a vehicle for social criticism, this description sets up the basic carnivale framework of the story, one based on a reversal of roles. As suggested by the references to classical mythology in the story's title, in the image of Cerberus, the three-headed dog who guards the gates of the underworld, and in the narrator's confession that he is in the midst of writing an epic poem on the night of the contest (51), the game is presented as an attempt to subvert mythology, both classical and local, by reversing, if only briefly, the positions of gods and mortals, of the River Heights Anglo elite and the North End "ethnic rabble." Osborne Stadium becomes the mythological arena where this reversal can be effected. "There, on Friday nights, the North End may once more experience the heady hours of triumph it knew during the 1919 Strike, when it seemed the World Revolution might begin right here in Winnipeg" (50).

This reversal seems a clear example of what Eli Mandel refers to when he notes that "in ethnic writing there is often an attempt at healing by the rewriting of myths" (61), or of what Linda Hutcheon and others point to as a postmodern strategy of subversion (Hutcheon 111). It can also be similarly read as a post colonial strategy of resistance--of articulating experience in marginal space and investing it with significance. By subverting the received story, Kleiman infuses "The Immortals" with moments of near triumph, when a masculine ethnic fantasy of long-awaited victory is nearly fulfilled:

Our players charged down the field as if they'd been transformed. In the fading sunlight, their town uniforms looked like golden armour, ablaze with precious stones; their helmets shone with emeralds and sapphires; and they moved with a grace and power that was electrifying. That two

hundred pound River Heights fullback ... caught the ball and was promptly hit by Sidney Cohen in the hardest flying tackle any of us had ever seen (55).

The North End fans cheer on their heroes "with enough energy to split the stadium apart and bring the walls of that Philistine temple down upon our enemies' heads," while about them "the city shone as if made of molten glass-- aflame in the radiance of the setting sun-- gates garnished with pearl and gold and all manner of precious stones" (57, 58). However, in "The Immortals," as in "The North End Buccaneers," the futility of the attempt to achieve final victory and the accompanying irony of the title becomes apparent as the North End goes down to defeat, both as a team, and ultimately, as a neighbourhood:

With the passage of time, the North End, too, has changed.
So final has its defeat become that it has even had thrust
upon it a suburb with such street names as Bluebell,
Marigold, Primrose and Cherryhill. Over the years, that two
hundred pound fullback has managed to race clear across the
city to score a touchdown right here in our home territory.
Now we also have our false Eden (59).

The story does, however, succeed in subverting the mythology of new world success by reversing the success/failure paradigm. Doing so turns success into valiant resistance against all odds, a definition that turns the North End players into heroes, at least for as long as the community lives in the memories of those who watched the game; it also turns the narrator's ultimate resistance of the South End's hegemony, which he describes in the final paragraphs, into a satisfyingly rebellious (and heroic) act (59).

Although the major thrust of resistance in these two stories is against the Anglo-Canadian majority, as symbolized by the neighbourhood of River Heights, in a number of stories the characters resist forces within the ethnic ghetto. In so doing, they exhibit the ambivalence of the second-generation

stance toward both the ethnic community and the larger society, illustrating the ways in which the polarities of integration/resistance and remembering/forgetting encompass complex, internal struggles as well as external ones. Interestingly, the forces that are resisted in Kleiman's fictional ghetto are the female forces of domesticity. Kleiman's narrator repeatedly casts his female characters as symbols of an oppressive cultural background. For example, in "A Sunday Afternoon with the North End Buccaneers" one of the first images is that of Mr. Bloomberg escaping a suffocating domesticity, symbolized by his wife and the smell of her chicken soup:

Any excuse would serve to escape the house, Mrs. Bloomberg and her kitchen, and a floor slippery with boiled over chicken soup.... Who wouldn't retreat to the delicatessen for some pastrami sandwiches, cold cokes and a few games of "Twenty-One or Bust" with those other expatriate husbands who had also fled kitchens that perpetually smelt of burnt toast and stale chicken soup? (13, 14)

A similar fear of being suffocated by females is expressed later by the narrator, when he describes Gordie Bloomberg's teenaged sisters:

We were aware that the girls' concern with us wasn't totally impartial. A few more years and who knows? The boys playing Monopoly might become prospective suitors for those unwanted girls. We were already uncomfortably aware of Marsha, her boobs bulging inside her tight woolen sweater in a brassiere several sizes too small. However, I suspected even then, just let her get married, even engaged, and the event would be taken as a license to remove all restraints. She'd be as huge as a barrel in less than a month. (14)

As if serving as a kind of symbol of the negative, smothering aspects of the ethnic community, and a scapegoat for the frustrations they foster, Kleiman's female characters are again and again the cause of a male character's downfall, the obstacle between him and his dreams. A particularly graphic and humorous example of this occurs in "The Handicap," in which a

salami that Michael's mother insists his brother take with him to summer camp so that he won't "starve to death on all that goy food" symbolizes the suffocating ethnocentrism of his family life--an ethnocentrism that threatens to become a lifetime obstacle to freedom and self-fulfillment.

Less humorous and more negative depictions of female characters occur in "My Mercurial Aunt," in which the main character is revealed to be ruthless, self-interested, and destructive of those around her; in "Harry the Starman," in which Harry Silverman's dreams of becoming an astronomer are thwarted by the conniving Sue Cramer, who eventually traps him into marrying her, thereby dooming him to the life of a minor accountant in his father-in-law's factory; and in "Greenspan's Studio," which reveals the tragedy of Sam Greenspan's life: that his wife, Hester, doesn't love him despite his generous, affectionate qualities and that she will ultimately do anything to leave him, including escaping into insanity.

Thus, women often symbolize the problematic aspects of minority ethnic experience in Kleiman's fiction, preventing the male protagonists from achieving a successful balance among the various polarities that shape their lives. Kleiman's fictional women often impede true success. They provide an overdose of ethnic culture, which must be resisted along with the assimilative forces of the South End; and they threaten the integrity of the protagonist's fragile identity. Ironically, they move him toward disintegration by not allowing him his own selective version of his past or the freedom to live as an individual beyond the restraints of family and community.

Kleiman's North End, then, contrasts interestingly with Marlyn's. Though both reveal a sharp cleavage in the ethnic and class geography of their fictional Winnipegs, Kleiman's symbolizes community and resistance,

albeit with some ambivalent features; Marlyn's reveals the tragedy of not resisting those forces that would obliterate the cultural and familial memories of its inhabitants. While in some ways their social commentary is similar--that the dreams and power embodied in River Heights are illusory--and their urban geographies are at times infused with a similar masculine model of combat, they differ in the degree to which they challenge this model, and in the nature of their thematic focus. Marlyn focuses on the susceptibility of the immigrant and his children to being seduced by the illusions at the heart of North American life, Kleiman on human failure and on the ultimate illusion of either individual or collective immortality. Both imbed their visions in the physical and social geography of the ethnic ghetto.

Like Kleiman, Jack Ludwig in his novel *Above Ground* (1968) shapes the North End into a masculine dreamscape that serves as the point of departure for a male *bildungsroman*; however, his protagonist's fantasy as he grows up on the eve and in the midst of World War II is much more explicitly that of a Don Juan rather than a gladiator or soldier. Although created in a much less direct, much less realistic mode than that of Marlyn or Kleiman, Ludwig's northern ghetto occasionally emerges as a place that would be familiar to Sandor or Michael: a cacophonous but irrepressible, multi-vocal world where "politics shrilled ... [amidst] the Salvation Army, pawnshops, beer joints, a bank, a fourth-run movie house, a commercial hotel, three flea bag flops ... pushers of Pravda, Der Sturmer, dope, nuns who were mendicants, riot-helmeted policemen, Chinese cooks, Negro barbecuers, Italian barbers, Jewish secondhand clothiers, toughs, hoods ... school kids" (49).

Although he achieves considerably more depth and complexity, Ludwig, like Kleiman, constructs this landscape in mythic proportions by frequently tapping into a variety of literary texts, as he does in the above passage by

adding to the list of North End characters, "nymphs, Don Giovannis, Faustuses, Medeas, Cyranos, Tartuffes, Clytemnestras" (49). This technique, which can be read as resistance through appropriation of imperial discourse, lends significance to a place otherwise vulnerable to being seen as both unappealing and unimportant. It also lends significance to the protagonist's struggles to free himself from his imperfections, symbolized by his sickly childhood and his crippled leg, and to find love. The latter quest is embodied in the narrator's fantasy that his fate is to pursue and be pursued by beautiful women. Making no secret of the significance of women to his protagonist's development, Ludwig, like Marlyn, casts them as saviours, but for Ludwig, who begins his text with a quote by T. S. Eliot, "so all women are one woman" (frontispiece), their role and power is always sexual, defined solely by masculine need and desire. Although constructing or deconstructing ethnicity is not the major focus of Ludwig's text, one might well read his 'chronicle of a North End Don Juan as a very recognizable projection of a wounded sensibility, one irrevocably shaped by the familiar polarities of immigrant experience and the related intense sense of loss, irreconcilability, and need that are recurrent themes in ethnic minority fiction, and as a post colonial text that resists imperial taxonomy by asserting the significance of places and people on the margins.

Several women writers have also used the North End as a setting for fictionalized immigrant and/or ethnic experience. Among these texts are three novels: Vera Lysenko's *Yellow Boots*, Maara Haas's *On the Street Where I Live*, and Adele Wiseman's *Crackpot*. While these fictions are in many ways similar to those by men discussed above, they differ significantly in that all have female protagonists and are preoccupied with synthesis and paradox as a means of resolving the polarities of immigrant and ethnic experience,

and in all the North End is a positive force, overall, in the process of harmonious resolution that is the central theme of their narratives.

Much of *Yellow Boots*, Vera Lysenko's female *bildungsroman* (Rasporich, Retelling), is set in rural Manitoba; nevertheless, Winnipeg's North End plays a significant role in the novel. It is the place where the main character, Lilli Landash, daughter of Ukrainian immigrants, ultimately comes of age, synthesizing the various elements of her life by becoming a new world singer of old world songs. It is also where she makes a career for herself as a dressmaker, and marries another immigrant, Reiner, an Austrian-Canadian musician. Lysenko's ghetto thus provides a space for the female second-generation immigrant, seemingly all but displaced by a rejecting yet overpowering mainstream culture and a tyrannical father. It also generates the synergistic dynamics that can begin to break down dichotomies and the limitations they impose. Thus, unlike many of the questing characters created by other fictionalizers of immigrant and ethnic experience, Lilli does not have to choose between losing her ethnic identity and losing her individual identity. She is able to find in the North End a balance between past and present that allows her to create a place for herself as ethnic, Canadian, artist, and female in the emergent multi-vocal prairie culture.

Although only sketchily drawn in *Yellow Boots*, the North End becomes foreground in both *The Street Where I Live* and *Crackpot*. Indeed, it is the apparent subject of Haas's book. Although its collage-style, episodic format is in some ways structurally innovative, *The Street Where I Live* (1976), like the novels discussed above, is a typical narrative of ethnic minority experience in that it is shaped by polarities. As in the novels discussed previously, in *The Street Where I Live* the North End is the major site for the interplay among these oppositions; however, Haas's text, like Lysenko's, goes considerably

further than any by male writers, in creating a North End that also embodies the resolution of these oppositions.

Haas's ambivalent position as mediator and apologist is inscribed in the text in a variety of ways. Even the title can be read as a subtle acknowledgment that home and neighbourhood are potentially problematic, since it suggests that "the street where I live" is somehow noteworthy, different, in need of explanation, apology. This impression is reinforced in the book's very first sentence: "The street where I live is divided by fences so it seems more crowded than it really is." That the dynamics focused on in the text that follows will be internal to the neighbourhood is established here, as is the predominantly light, humorous tone, which is nevertheless sufficiently ironic to suggest that this mode of telling the story masks a darker, competing reality:

Actually, the lots are huge--25-27 feet. Most of the shanties have a large screened verandah and a master bedroom big enough for a brass bed that sleeps six people easily, with leftover space for a kitchen chair to put your clothes on. Of course the bedroom window is a bit small. A good thing. Because it saves on the heat (1).

While the contrast between the have and have-not geography of Haas's fictional Winnipeg is the subtext of the above passage, and of the novel as a whole, in sharp contrast with Marlyn's approach, Haas seldom refers to this difference directly. Rather, the conflict she foregrounds, the one that embodies most obviously the polarities typical of ethnic minority fiction, is that among the various ethnic groups within the ghetto. For example, the first scene the reader encounters is one that presents the underlying struggle for space and pre-eminence between neighbours on the street, Mrs. Kolosky and Mrs. Weinstein, with Haas relying largely on names, dialects, and stereotypical symbols and behaviours to signify her characters' respective

ethnic backgrounds. The anxieties generating this conflict are closely related to the success/failure polarity, e.g. what irritates Mrs. Kolosky about Mrs. Weinstein's fence is that it is "classier" than hers.

Why did it have to be something classy like a galvanized iron fence? Mrs. Kolosky's fence didn't pretend to be classy--just ordinary chicken wire and sweetpeas laced with white string, the kind that comes from a bobbin hanging over the cash register of any grocery store (1).

Interestingly, what ultimately stops this feud is the arrival in the neighbourhood of Mrs. Britannia, who, as a "foreigner" seems to both women to be in need of their (ethnocentric) nurturance: "Boze, Boze," says Mrs. Kolosky (translation: God God):

More foreigners already English yet. The worst kind. Poor woman, says Mrs. Weinstein. You should know from her pasty white face, she is eating only English white bread and suet. Suet. I use for lighting candles to Our Virgin Mary, answers Mrs. Kolosky. But for eating, like you say it, Mrs. Weinstein. Oy Vay (no translation available): What the poor orphans are crying for is a pot of healthy red borsch. Faah on borsch, says Mrs. Weinstein. For curing anything and everything, the chicken soup is first.... That was the end of the feud, no harm done. And there they are as close as lice: Mrs Weinstein, Mrs. Kolosky and Mrs. Britannia. sitting on Mrs. Kolosky's verandah, spitting sunflower seeds in the friendly autumn of old comrades (4,5).

This episode could be read not only as a comment on the solidarity of eastern European ethnicity vis-a-vis the "English" or on the solidarity of the working class, but also as an almost carnivalesque reversal of imperial order that valorizes marginal, "ethnic" territory and female sensibility. As well as being a reversal of Connor's North End, in which the "ethnic" characters are always in need of help from the "Anglo-Saxons," the ghetto Haas's narrator gives us also contrasts sharply with Sandor Hunyadi's disease-infested tenement or Michael Buchalter's mock-heroic battleground. Like Lysenko's North End, Haas's is a place that can nourish individuals and dissolve dichotomies. For

Lysenko, female artistry is the agent of transformation; for Haas it is the maternal drive to nurture those perceived to be weak or ill, to include everyone. Thus, rather than a fantasy of conquest, Haas's text can be read as a maternal parable about how to transform rivalry into harmony, thereby making space for all. One can read behind the text an anxiety about ethnic difference and a desire to successfully diffuse potential conflict, as well as a desire to valorize ethnic space and sensibility.

Shaping a North End that is both distinctive but inclusive out of gentle burlesque, slapstick, and irony allows Haas to critique with virtual impunity both the ethnic North Enders and members of the Anglo-Canadian establishment while simultaneously making the former more acceptable and less threatening to the latter, and, it should not be forgotten, to the second generation. Through a marginalized, third-generation narrator, she constructs a kind of north country urban "Dog patch" peopled with caricatures of stereotypical ethnic characters that can be read as an encoding of deep anxieties about the place of the ethnic other in Canadian society. However, seen through the eyes of this prepubescent female, who is trying to make sense of and find her place in her immediate surroundings as well as in the larger world of Canada in the early 1940s, the North End as humorous ethnic pastiche also becomes a vehicle for harmonizing inter-ethnic tensions within the ghetto as well as for making space for the ethnic "other" within the hegemonic discourse.

Haas's synthesizing vision is projected repeatedly through a variety of ironic devices and in the names and descriptions of her characters. A comic strip landscape peopled with such figures as Herman the Laughing Butcher, Hobarty the Hunchback, Moishe the Manipulator, Harry the Hugger, Oiving Monahan, Oreste the Undertaker, Laspoesky the Druggist, and other comic

grotesques, many of them frequenters of the Cockroach Cafe, is one that enables the narrator to distance herself from both the ghetto and ethnic identification, while at the same time allowing her to proclaim insider knowledge and loyalty. This ambivalence is clear, for example, in the description of aspiring ethnic politician, Brains Slawchuk, "choirleader, drama director, prospective school trustee and local honey-dipper for outlying outhouses" (46); and in the macaronic humour which plays on a knowledge of both the ethnic language and English, as in the name Shmurkaty Kapusta, which is funny to Anglo-Canadian readers because of its unfamiliar and "silly" rhythm and sound in English, but is even more so to readers who also understand Ukrainian, and who recognize Kapusta as "cabbage" and Shmurkaty as "runny nose" (Klymasz 764-66).

The themes of hybridity and synthesis are also projected through the narrator herself, and her quest for place and wholeness. It is she who presents in the guise of comedy the incongruities of her family life: incongruities that stem from being the daughter of Laspoesky the druggist, whose professional practice encompasses the conflicts between old world and new, folk medicine and positivistic science, as, for example, when he must meld the seemingly conflicting discourses of folkloric spells and pharmaceutical prescriptions, and the narrator must read the result in Ukrainian for the Ancient Grandmother: "Take six steps across the threshold of the barn, spit in a westerly direction and apply the ointment to afflicted parts of lumbago" (164). Indeed, the narrator presents the drugstore as one of a number of neighbourhood institutions (the Cafe, the hockey rink, the dry goods store, Shevchenko hall) that mediate across these and other polarities, and ultimately synthesize disparate parts into a whole. However, even this synthesis is often presented ambivalently, as, for example, in the nearly oxymoronic combinations

embodied in the names of neighbourhood baseball teams, the Virgin Mary Maple Leafs and The Star of David Ukrainian-Canadians ("a Ukrainian Trident on the chest and a Star of David on the sleeve"), which hover between two seemingly incompatible narrative realms, nonsense and mysticism (199).

The narrator's confusion over whether to remember or forget one's cultural past and how to do either; over the nature of one's experience (that is, what is illusion, what reality); and over the possibilities for women in the world she sees around her, is projected in a memorable scene where she and her friend, reveling in the freedom of having been left alone to mind the drugstore, experiment with various styles of makeup and discuss their favourite magazines. The two modes of narration discussed, *True Romance* and *True Confession* (the narrator's preference), are both flirted with; however, both are ultimately subverted and rejected by means of the very ironic humour Haas has chosen as the alternative means for representing ethnic and female spaces. This fictional mode effects a humorous synthesis of inter-ethnic differences and rivalries, while at the same time creating a fluid, transformative space for the ethnic female as sturdy Mother Earth figure, as progressive modern woman, and ultimately as synthetic artist--writer/mediator--the role promised to and ultimately played by the narrator in this female *bildungsroman*.

Like Lysenko's *Yellow Boots* and Haas's *The Street Where I Live*, Adele Wiseman's *Crackpot* (1974) presents a version of the ethnic ghetto that contrasts markedly with those presented by either Marlyn or Kleiman. Besides being rendered with more literary depth and subtle artistry than in either *Under the Ribs of Death* or *The Immortals*, the North End that emerges from *Crackpot* is a female space, and one that embodies a more

profound, though constructive, critique of Canadian society than that offered by either of the other two novels. Writing in a primarily metaphoric and mythic mode that enables her to fashion larger-than-life characters, Wiseman creates the North End not through an accumulation of physical details, as do Marlyn and Kleiman, but through the feelings and interactions of her characters, particularly her main character, Hoda, and through a web of stories that constitute the shared history of the larger Jewish community, the North End ghetto with its particular events and personalities, and Hoda's immediate family.

Wiseman draws on ancient ethno-cultural tradition as well as on the experiences of the European shtetl, expressed primarily in Yiddish, and on North End gossip, the latter often reflecting the tensions inherent in the process of immigrant adjustment and ethnic acculturation to the new world (Greenstein). In so doing, she illuminates the psycho-cultural dynamics of the ethnic ghetto, depicting its contours and boundaries in terms of shared and conflicting sensibilities. She paints a North End that is a comfortable home, despite its faults, and draws on some of the traditions that constitute the cultural inheritance of the Jewish ghetto to delineate the nature of the boundary between it and the other sensibilities that surround and define it. Not surprisingly, she focuses primarily on the boundary between the Jewish ghetto and the Anglo-Canadian establishment, profoundly critiquing some of the fundamental assumptions of the latter, particularly its privileging of its own history and its related failure to acknowledge the cultural validity of the ethnic others--the legitimacy and value of their potential contribution to Canadian society.⁴

⁴ In his first chapter, Sollors has a thought-provoking discussion of ethnicity as boundary. He explores Frederik Barth's view that "the essence of ethnicity [is] in such mental, cultural, social, moral, aesthetic, and territorial boundary-constructing processes which function as

Unlike Sandor Hunyadi, Wiseman's Hoda, also an immigrant child during the nativistic years⁵ of World War I, does not internalize the mainstream ethnic and class hierarchy that devalues both her North End neighbourhood and her cultural origins. Although Hoda, like Sandor, constructs childish fantasies about receiving some sign of acceptance into "the empire," her dream of being singled out as his future queen by the Prince of Wales is based on her own sense of self worth--on her faith in her own special qualities, which he may be discerning enough to recognize. For her, the empire's true royalty is just as likely to be found on its margins as at its centre.

In this recurring fantasy, as in her interactions throughout the novel, Hoda demonstrates none of Sandor's self-hatred and his accompanying obsession with concealment. Rather, she accepts herself, and assumes her value. In sharp contrast with Sandor, Hoda is obsessed not with concealment, but with revelation. She wants desperately to tell her story, to break the silence about the nature and significance of the personal, familial, and cultural odyssey that has brought her to the new world. As a child, she is sure that telling her story will win her the respect and affection she knows she deserves. "If they only knew! Well, they ought to know.... And Hoda began to wonder whether she shouldn't perhaps tell Miss Flake and the rest of the class how much more there was to it than they could possibly imagine" (59).

cultural markers between groups. For Barth it is the ethnic boundary that defines the group, not the cultural stuff it encloses" (27).

⁵ In his pioneering American study (1965), *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925*, New York: Atheneum, John Higham defines nativism as opposition to an internal minority on the grounds of its foreign connections. Howard Palmer (1982) adapts the concept to the Canadian context. Clearly, this usage, common in North American historical and sociological scholarship, is related to, but different from that in postcolonial discourse, in which the term is used to denote 'third world' nationalism.

Hoda displays a similar confidence when she is visited by a group of ladies from the Protestant church that sponsors basket weaving courses for the blind which her father, Danile, attends. Concerned about Danile's absence, and feeling that "some gesture should be made," the Protestant ladies "adventured forth into the unknown north-end of town." Hoda invites them in enthusiastically, and tells them about the recent death of her mother. Though she finds them to be "rather odd old ladies, stiff and unfamiliar, who spoke to you with squared-off words, like teachers, and with the foreignness of the majority, a little fearsome in that you could never rely on any balance of (their conversation's) shifting elements of ingratiation, confidence, contempt and what sometimes even felt like fear," she is determined "not to be afraid of them." She even assumes their good intentions. "They must be nice; they had come. Maybe they were hungry" (63, 64). But in fictionalizing a North End Winnipeg that "was the very incubator of conflicting absolutes" (Belkin), Wiseman creates an Anglo-Canadian sensibility, symbolized by the Protestant visitors, that responds to Hoda's openness and generosity with obdurate incomprehension and rejection. Seeing only "an old shack" and "a grossly fat adolescent" who offers them horrifically uncivilized food as well as inappropriately graphic medical details concerning her mother's illness, spiced with shockingly inappropriate language, the imperial delegation of Protestant ladies, thoroughly dismayed, attempts to leave. Hoda, who has worked hard to maintain a pleasant home for her father, showing a dedication and ability beyond her years, feels compelled, despite her own relief at the imminent departure of these "ungiving presences," to "draw from them some unequivocal recognition of their value, hers and her daddy's" (65).

Regardless of her desire and self confidence, Hoda is unable to pry this acknowledgment from her reluctant guests. Instead, they send anonymous tracts attempting to convert Hoda and her father to their particular brand of Christianity. Although he is oblivious to it, Danile's attempts at his basket weaving classes to offer something of himself and his culture to Anglo-Canada, as represented by these Protestant ladies of charity, are also rejected:

Danile responded well to the music. It was natural to him to sing while he worked, as his father had done before him.... It even occurred to him after awhile, when he had begun to feel more at home in this place, that his companions might like to learn a new tune occasionally. Accordingly, he waited politely one day for a break in the organ music, and when he felt the appropriate time had come, he obligingly offered them a few Yiddish ditties in his not unpleasant cantorial tenor. His interpolated offerings were at first greeted by a shocked and embarrassed silence on the part of the ladies who ran the guild ... [who] were particularly uneasy about the possibly blasphemous content of the songs, about liltings too suspiciously gay, or complaints too foreign and even too sinister perhaps, to be heard in the basement of a church.... There was an activist faction among them which responded to his songs as though to a hostile invasion (62).

Similarly, Hoda's attempt to tell her story to her school class is cut short and thoroughly rejected by her teacher, Miss Boltholmsup, the latter's name clearly suggesting the inadequacy of the values and sensibility she represents. However, Hoda does not internalize that rejection; rather, she is simply astonished and hurt by the stupidity of it (100).

Later, when Hoda has become a kind of parodic embodiment of female capacities, both whore and dutiful Jewish daughter, she continues to value herself and to act confidently despite her amplified, larger-than-life marginality: as a poor Jewish fat woman and a prostitute, she is vulnerable to being seen as an outsider in multiple ways. Despite this, she confidently assumes her place within the Jewish community, attending every wedding, and later in her life every funeral, gradually earning a kind of place, not only

at the wedding table, where eventually "to be expected is to be invited" (124), but also in the stories and gossip that Wiseman uses to create and sustain the North End Jewish community. While as a prostitute, she often figures negatively in that lore, over time she earns a sort of grudging respect and a definite place, suggested in the phrase Wiseman uses repeatedly to describe her activities: "legend has it" (168). By the time World War II breaks out, she has even become "good old mamma Hoda" (270).

Nor does Hoda want to flee the ghetto, either physically or psychologically. While Kleiman's narrator recalls the ghetto in primarily positive tones, his viewpoint being a retrospective one that creates a North End out of the roseate hues of nostalgia, turning it into a thing of the past synonymous with lost youth, Wiseman's Hoda remains there, attempting to reconcile past, present, and future within it. Reversing Sandor Hunyadi's naive equation of the downtown hotels and River Heights with being "rich, English and happy," Hoda equates happiness, safety, and her own sense of self worth with her private and communal home in the North End. As a child, "Hoda was rather proud of her tumble up and down porch and the tree that was giving it a ride.... She showed it off to her friends" (26). Much later, Hoda takes pride in the way she and Danile, with his basket weaving artistry, have been able to "turn the inside of a shack into such a pretty home." She even asks her customers confidently, "You like the decor?" (215).

When, as a sexually precocious adolescent, she is encouraged to leave the ghetto to work the downtown by Seraphina, an old school friend who has also become a prostitute, she does so reluctantly just once. Unlike Sandor, who is constantly deceived by surfaces and consequently thinks that concealing his true origins behind a new English name will overcome the ethno-cultural barriers to the material success he craves, Hoda is aware that

the makeup she puts on under Seraphina's encouraging eye hides nothing and is contrary to her own personal style and forthright nature. For her, the landscape beyond the North End is hardly a paradise, as it is for Sandor. The grand hotels that she had envisioned are not the ones to which her customers take her. She also quickly learns of the disadvantages and dangers of plying her trade in unfamiliar territory, beyond the protective communal boundaries.

If they caught you, the guy got sent to jail ... and you could get sent to reform school.... Hoda didn't think it was worthwhile going downtown if that was going to happen to you. What if the cops caught her, and suppose she didn't remember to start hollering "rape" on time, or they didn't believe her.... What would happen to Daddy? (133)

After a few encounters with customers, Hoda compares the experience unfavourably with her business in the North End. "It was like what she was used to, only she didn't feel the same about it; she didn't feel she really knew what he was like, the way she felt when she did it even with total strangers, in her own part of town. He hardly said anything and she didn't really even know what he looked like. It wasn't as though they were having fun together at all, or sharing a good secret, or anything" (133). Hoda misses the sense of community that she feels, even as a prostitute, in the ethnic ghetto, and decides that "it would be a long time before she tried to work downtown again" (135).

Although Hoda is generous, both sexually and otherwise, she insists on protecting her home and her "Daddy" from anyone who might harm them. She requires her customers to play along with her father's assumptions about her work: that she is a tutor and they are her pupils. Later, she takes measures to protect her home from city authorities who she fears might condemn it, particularly since the growth of the tree in the front yard has

finally ripped the verandah completely off. "That's what they did when they got the chance," Hoda comments, "chase you out of your own home" (216).

Significantly, in her battle with the city to protect her space, her primary weapons are words, as when she places a sign declaring "Danger. Verandah Under Repair" in front of her house to deter fastidious inspectors. She develops a similar strategy with the public health officials at city hall, where she goes periodically to be checked for venereal disease. Resenting being treated there like "something at the other end of a long stick," she "developed over the years, a kind of sophistication, a public attitude, a way of outfacing whoever faced her" (209, 210). This strategy involves using words skillfully (much as Wiseman herself does) to undermine through parody and irony the false sense of superiority of those in power. She declares loudly that she too "is a citizen and she had her rights and they ought to be glad she had a sense of responsibility" (203).

Through her assertiveness and her storytelling skills, Hoda is able to make a place for herself and her old friend Hymie (the "on the make" character in the novel who achieves wealth and a kind of sleazy success as a bootlegger) in the heart of the city, as embodied in its motto: "Commerce, Prudence and Industry." Regaling her waiting room audience with her stories, Hoda asks:

Have you ever noticed that motto up front? ... You know, like, our city motto. You don't even know your own city motto? What kind of citizen are you? I know it all right. I ought to. It says, "Commerce, Prudence, Industry." That's my motto too, in fact. I figure if it's good enough for my home town, it's good enough for me. Commerce? Any time you like. Prudence? What do you think I'm doing here with the bottle? Industry? Hell, I ain't had no complaints yet. I figure I'm a model citizen.... Instead of those pictures they have of the sheaf of wheat and the buffalo and stuff, they should pay me to go sit up there, just like I am now, or maybe

in my bareskin on a bench.... People would look then all right. (211, 212)

Similarly, she imbeds Hymie's story within the city's motto, suggesting that his somewhat shady activities and dedication to material success are actually very congruent with the subtext of the motto, if not with its outwardly decorous tone:

And now Hymie's moved down East, and he's gone into industry, and he's a millionaire today. How do you like that.... So don't you ever be ashamed of your city motto.... You can take those three words, plus a little bit of this and a little bit of that, and you can end up where you won't ever have to worry about commerce, prudence and industry again because when you're up there that high, anything you do or don't do is all right by everyone all over. And I'm the dumb bunny who tried to tell him it wasn't honest.... Come to think of it, maybe they should change our motto up there altogether. Instead of those three words and those pictures, they should have a picture of a big, naked arse, and underneath it just two words, RISK IT! (213)

As if sensing a kind of invasion in Hoda's words, just as many years before Miss Boltholmsup had feared Hoda's story and Hoda herself as a representative of a growing number of immigrants (particularly Jewish ones), "fat presences with demanding eyes" (96), the school teachers who have been the audience for Hoda's commentary on the city motto react with a "momentary flutter of guilty smiles that were not smiles really, but the involuntary expression of their astonishment. At times one's own dear familiar country can suddenly seem so foreign" (213).

It is clear from these and other instances that reveal Hoda's combined sense of pride in her origins, belief in her own worth, and ability to see beneath surface realities, that she is determined to carve out a physical, psychic and cultural space for herself in Canada. She is quite willing to be assertive in doing so, as, for example, during the Winnipeg General Strike when she attacks a mounted policeman who is threatening Mr. Polonick, her

radical friend and former teacher from her days in Yiddish school. However, Hoda's vision of Winnipeg's urban geography is not the male vision of Sandor Hunyadi or of Kleiman's thinly veiled autobiographical narrator, Michael Buchalter. She does not see the North and South Ends of the city through either the imagery of paradise/inferno or of battle. Rather, the metaphor that is expressed through Hoda and informs the entire structure of *Crackpot*, one taken from Lurianic Kabbalism, a strand of Jewish mysticism, asserts not polarities, but the paradoxical union of opposites, not aggressive force or rationality as the key to transformative power, but experience of the transcendent, particularly love (Ponce). In this way, Wiseman's text resolutely resists imperial discourse.

And, while all of the fictions I have discussed portray the North End ethnic ghetto as a space that encompasses and symbolizes the tensions that inevitably arise out of the process of immigrant adjustment to Canadian society, tensions that are characteristically expressed in immigrant and/or ethnic fictions in the polarities of success/failure, identity/disintegration, revelation/concealment, forgetting/remembering, and integration/resistance, only Wiseman uses her protagonist's version of it to fully claim the space denied to the ethnic immigrant in Ralph Connor's version of the North End and in his view of the desirable evolution of Canadian society. While Haas also recasts the North End ghetto in a way that transforms it from the battleground that it is in the work of the male writers I have discussed, and makes of it a synthetic force, she does not go as far as Wiseman in suggesting an eventual resolution of the contradictions that shape her characters' lives. Using the profoundly marginal character of Hoda, and drawing deeply on Jewish tradition and on the North American mythology of immigration--a mythology that assumes the inevitability and rightness of the immigrant's

losing her past to acquire the history and sensibility of the majority--Wiseman reshapes both, thoroughly undermining the paradigm that equates immigrant/ethnic and ghetto with social problem.⁶ Through parody, metaphor, and allusion, she retells the immigrant story from a female and ethnic-insider perspective in a way that re-defines success, asserts cultural identity, and reveals the wealth of new world possibilities within the old world culture and the need for them in the new world.

Wiseman does this through the novel's characters, themes, and structure, all of which are based on the notion of a paradoxical union of opposites. For example, Hoda's father, Danile, is a wise fool, a blind seer who can look beneath surface appearances to underlying realities; Hoda's mother is a cripple who can carry her family on her deformed shoulders; Hoda herself is both a prostitute and the most dutiful of Jewish daughters, an embodiment of seemingly contradictory female roles. Their family's myth of origin, which preoccupies both Danile and Hoda, is one that begins in a graveyard, and Hoda traces both her birth and her family's journey to the new world back to death and calamity. And, even though once in the new world they are abandoned by their rich uncle and live in poverty, they feel in some way lucky. As Danile puts it, "You wouldn't believe our luck, for on the surface, aren't we the unluckiest people in the world? But study things, study and you'll see. God only seems to punish.... God blinded me for reasons of his own, and the loss is nothing to the gain. For if I had not been blind and your mother had not been a little crooked many wonderful things would not have

⁶ See Hutcheon (1988), especially Chapter 6, "Shape Shifters," for a discussion of the techniques, particularly paradox, used by Canadian women writers to reshape traditions and re-write myths. For an earlier and interesting argument about the transformative role of the adolescent female in ethnic fiction, see E. D. Blodgett, "Fictions of Ethnicity in Prairie Writing," in *Essays on the Canadian Literatures*. Downsview, Ont.: ECW Press, 1982.

happened and you would probably never have been born. Shouldn't I call that luck?" (9, 10).

This paradoxical union of opposites is expressed most intensely in the inscription at the beginning of *Crackpot*:

He stored the Divine Light in a Vessel, but the Vessel, unable to contain the Holy Radiance, burst, and its shards, permeated with sparks of the Divine scattered through the Universe.

Drawn from the work of Rabbi Isaac Luria, "whose speculations gave birth to modern Kabbalism," (Ponce 79) or Jewish mysticism, the quote, which is taken from a Kabbalistic legend of creation, provides both the novel's title and the metaphor on which it is structured. Although the metaphor embodies a mystical doctrine too complex to explore fully here, it captures the inseparability of good and evil, suggesting that a cracked pot is not just a useless piece of pottery but a vessel whose bursting allowed the divine to permeate the universe, rendering dichotomies meaningless and erasing boundaries between inside and outside. Hoda is just such a vessel and she and her story are profoundly subversive of the dualistic sensibility that confines the immigrant both from without and from within.

By remembering and resisting via this strategy of multiple de colonization, *Crackpot* unites the polarities inherent in ethnic minority experience and also provides a far-reaching critique of the aggressive, Anglo-centric, masculine ethos that shaped the new world in its own image and attempted to control the spaces available within it. Wiseman fictionalizes the female immigrant dream of finding a legitimate space, a home--in the new world, but not through a dichotomous, fictional world where to find a space for themselves, immigrants and their children can only disintegrate into the unyielding majority in hopes of achieving an elusive material success. Nor does she accomplish this through a dream of conquering the hegemonic

Anglo-Canadian "other" through fantasies of heroic prowess and invincibility. Rather, she fictionalizes the ethnic ghetto into a place, not just of endings (either happy or sad), but of beginnings, a starting point from which her characters can assert the paradoxical power of a love that can unite opposites, and the power of an artistry that can draw on its unique past and present circumstances to create an illuminating synthesis, one that, in re-visioning the ethnic ghetto and the people who live there, refuses to be defined and confined by hegemonic discourse.

CHAPTER FOUR

Constructing Ethnicity as Social Criticism

In a time like now art is subversive when it points to a holistic, holographic and spiral interpretation of time, space, and reality ... when it promises erotic, sensual, and nurturing possibilities; when it directs us to look at human instead of economic needs; when it argues that matter is merely the extension of what we call spirit or soul ... when it articulates that power is what arises from the inside, not from the outside (k.o. kanne 47)

The notion that literature might be a means for criticizing and even changing society, in short that literature is political, is by no means a new one to be associated only with the recent "paradigm shift" discussed in the Introduction. As G.N. Sharma reminds readers in his introduction to *Literature and Commitment*, Plato's argument for banishing poets from his Republic was in large measure based on his belief that they were dangerous to the State. Nor has the assumption that literature should serve worthy social ends been an arcane one. Sharma quotes M.H. Abrams who points out that the view which "'looks at the work of art as chiefly a means to an end, as an instrument for getting something done, and which tends to judge its value according to its success in achieving that aim'... has been the principal aesthetic attitude of the Western world from the time of Horace to the eighteenth century"(Sharma 7). Clearly, this is not the place to discuss the various debates surrounding the merits of this view of literature in relation to such differing positions as those advanced by the various "art for arts' sake" movements, by modernism, by aesthetic criticism in general, to say nothing of the perhaps even more numerous and complex debates over what might constitute a worthy cause. However, it is also very clear, and important to acknowledge, that these debates about the nature of the

relationships among literature, society, and politics (broadly defined), are part of the larger context that informs the literary texts I have focused on.

The interpretive framework that I have applied to these texts highlights their political positioning and significance. Viewed as an expression of "the ethnic voice" or as "ethnic" apologist fiction, these texts are strategically situated between a dominant group and one that is marginal, making them a natural vehicle for group advocacy and social criticism; or, as Sollors puts it in discussing the role of ethnicity in American literature, "(T)he alliance of ethnic realism, spokesmanship, and social criticism has remained powerful for more than a century" ("Literature and Ethnicity 658). Viewed as postcolonial texts, they are likewise part of a process that is inevitably political, since post-colonial analysis highlights the political significance of art, asserting that "...'culture' mediates relations of power as effectively, albeit in more indirect and subtle ways, as more public and visible forms of oppression" (Moore-Gilbert 8). For example, this connection is central to the argument Said advances in his analyses of Orientalism. In supporting his assertion that literature was an important element in the ideological apparatus that under girded imperialism and colonialism (and continues to support neo colonialism), Said draws on William Blake's assertion that "The Foundation of Empire is Art and Science. Remove them or Degrade them and the Empire is No more. Empire follows Art and not vice versa..." (as quoted in *Culture* 13).

And, as Said and other post-colonial analysts point out, cultural domination inspires cultural resistance--"an immense wave of anti-colonial and ultimately anti-imperial activity, thought, and revision" (Said, *Culture* 195; Slemon, *Unsettling* 31). Having lost "a valid and active sense of self", i.e. having been "dislocated" by "migration, the experience of enslavement"

or "cultural denigration" (Ashcroft, et.al. 8), the subordinated "other" will eventually resist: "The energizing feature of this displacement is its capacity to interrogate and subvert the imperial cultural formations" (Ashcroft, et. al. 11).¹ In this chapter, I argue that the texts produced by insiders who fictionalize immigrant and/or ethnic experience in Canada are sites of this kind of resistance by interrogation and subversion, and that as such, they criticize and, to varying degrees, attempt to transform some of the discourses and institutions of domination. However, their engagement is, characteristically, in the indirect mode Rick Salutin describes in discussing "revolutionary" writing:

In writing, it seems to me, one is trying primarily to tell the truth about reality, to pull back the curtain and reveal how the world functions. The political effect of such writing...is not in recruiting people to a certain point of view--to revolution--but in enabling them to see how the world around them works, instead of all the ways its workings are usually veiled from them. So that as they continue to encounter it, they may freely evaluate and choose and shape the world which has so often misshapen them (as quoted in Brydon, *The Enemy* 11):

Before one can fully appreciate the discursive position from which insiders who fictionalize immigrant and/or ethnic experience "pull back the curtain and reveal how the world functions," it is useful to consider the ways in which the ethnic "other" has been constructed and used as a vehicle for social commentary and criticism by those writing from within the dominant culture. Doing so enables one to see more clearly what the ethnic apologist is writing against.

Mainstream Constructions of Ethnicity as Social Criticism

¹ An interesting version of this argument, though not from a post-colonial perspective *per se* has been advanced in several texts by Isaiah Berlin. See, for example, Nathan Gardels, "Two Concepts of Nationalism: An Interview with Isaiah Berlin." Berlin calls it the "bent twig" phenomenon, i.e. a wounded collective sensibility "is like a bent twig, forced down so severely that when released, it lashes back with fury" (19).

As Leslie Monkman, Terrence Craig, and others have shown, the ethnic other has quite often served as a vehicle for social criticism in the work of "mainstream" Canadian writers.² As Monkman puts it in *A Native Heritage*, his exhaustive study of the uses to which images of Native peoples have been put in Canadian literature in English,

In each era of Canadian literary history, writers have turned to the Indian and his culture for standards by which to measure the values and goals of white Canadian society, for patterns of cultural destruction, transformation, and survival, and for new heroes and indigenous myths (3).

Monkman makes it abundantly clear that the Indian has been used again and again in Canadian literature not only to lend "authenticity" to the emerging voice of settler literature in relation to that of Europe, but also to both bolster and critique the values and practices of Canadian society. More recently, Daniel Francis (1992) has illuminated the extent to which this use of "the Indian" has also been a feature of our popular culture, where the image has often been used as a vehicle for social criticism. Typically presented in a variety of popular forms from the Wild West Show to the Hollywood film as either the noble or ignoble savage, the Indian has been constructed as the other whose inferiority made right and natural the triumph of Europeans in North America, or as the other whose superiority made clear the ways in which that society was deficient.³

As has been pointed out in the Introduction, the images of Native peoples have occupied a unique place in the imaginative discourse of

² See, for example, Beverly Rasporich, "Native Voices in English-Canadian Literature: Ancient and Contemporary," and Barbara Godard, "The Politics of Representation."

³ In addition to Daniel Francis's excellent monograph, *The Imaginary Indian*, see Marilyn Burgess, "Canadian 'Range Wars': Struggles over Indian Cowboys." For the Wild West Show in particular, and its influence on Canadian popular culture through the Calgary Stampede and its founder, Guy Weadick, a wild west performer, see Donna Livingstone, *The Cowboy Spirit: Guy Weadick and the Calgary Stampede*.

European and North American settler culture; however, images of the immigrant/ethnic other have served a similar purpose in Canadian culture generally and in Canadian literature (Aponiuk, *The Problem*; Craig). Ralph Connor's unsavoury Galicians in *The Foreigner* (1909) bolster Connor's vision of the ideal Canadian society, one based on the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon peoples and their cultures. Though they serve to critique rather than to bolster the social order, Gwethalyn Graham's carefully non-stereotypical Jewish characters in *Earth and High Heaven* (1944) are similar to Connor's Galicians in that both are majority constructions of the ethnic other in the service of a particular social vision.

In the same vein, Robertson Davies in *The Rebel Angels* (1981) constructs ethnicity as a vehicle for social commentary. The exotic Maria Theotoky (half Polish, half Gypsy) and her volatile Gypsy mother represent a colourful, passionate, mystery-laden antidote to the cooler, more prosaic and less energetic Anglo-Canadian soul. Margaret Laurence makes similar use of ethnicity in her various Manawaka fictions in which she illuminates the nature of the cultural burden carried by her Scots Calvinist protagonists by contrasting them with her "ethnic" characters. For example in *A Jest of God* (1966), Nick Kazlik's Ukrainian background makes him freer, more fun-loving and expressive than the driven and inhibited Rachel Cameron; in *The Diviners* (1974) the Métis characters serve this function, in particular Jules Tonneres is a kind of soul mate and muse to the repressed, unconventional and passionate strand of Morag Gunn's complex artistic personality, and their daughter, Pique becomes an important symbol of the potential strength and beauty of cultural hybridity (particularly when it incorporates Aboriginal peoples) and of its significance to Canada's national destiny.

While one must certainly acknowledge that the commentary offered through the construction of ethnicity by such mainstream writers as Graham and Laurence is quite different from that offered by the earlier and far more Anglo-centric Connor, all nevertheless construct the ethnic other from the outside in ways that are primarily geared to illuminating Anglo Canadian society. Those writers whose work is the subject of this thesis--insider writers of the first and subsequent generations of non-British and non-French immigrants to Canada--have also constructed ethnicity in ways that constitute a societal critique; however, they do so somewhat differently than "mainstream writers." As Terrence Craig puts it,

The body of fiction dealing with racial issues during and after the Second World War may be divided into two categories. The immigrant writers (first, second, and even third generation) wrote from outside the safety of English-Canadian membership and exposed the terms of that membership as un-Canadian. The developing English-Canadian group.... looked out upon the problem (racism) from their still privileged position inside the crumbling garrison... (96).

In post-colonial terms, the former (positioned as they are on the margins of the empire with which the latter can claim a kind of kinship), must write back to the centre and to some considerable degree against the texts of mainstream writers. The position of immigrant writers on the boundary between their group and the larger society is, as I argue in Chapters Two and Three, one that produces a discourse of apology that typically encodes immigrant and ethnic experience through binary patterns that it then, to varying degrees, deconstructs. In this Chapter, I explore some of the patterns and the targets of this frequently ambivalent critique, arguing that the double-edged "voice" of apology constitutes a post colonial discursive strategy, one that not only "bears witness to the unequal and uneven forces of cultural representation involved in the contest for political and social

authority within the modern world order" (Bhabha, *Nation* 437), but also challenges this hegemony.

Warts and All? Representing the Ethnic 'Other'

In his analysis of ethnicity and American literature, Werner Sollors often highlights, in one way or another, the significance of the mediator position occupied by ethnic writers, the way it shapes both the content and the form of their texts. "The point of departure of classic ethnic literature," he contends in an early discussion of the subject, "especially of writings in English, often was to blur ethnic stereotypes by presenting an inside view of ethnicity which could make 'otherness' understandable to American readers" (Sollors, *Ethnicity* 658). Sollors' statement is, I would argue, applicable to insider literature about immigrant and/or ethnic experience in Canada. And, further, it suggests the complex constraints inherent in apology.

Presenting an "inside view" of a group defined as marginal by a variable combination of recent immigrant status and/or race, ethnicity, and class is to some considerable degree a perilous enterprise, as suggested by the reaction to the work of such Canadian writers as Mordecai Richler, Rudy Wiebe, Di Brandt, and Joy Kogawa, all of whom have been criticized by the groups they portray for having painted an unflattering portrait of an already unappreciated people, and/or by the larger society for having unfairly criticized its institutions and values (Kogawa, *Dilemma*). Some writers address the difficulty of their position quite directly. For example, Chinese-Canadian writer, Charlie Jang, who has written three novels about the Chinese immigrant experience on the prairies (only one of which has been fully translated into English), attempts to address the sensibilities of his readers, both insiders and outsiders, as well as to assert his apologist intention

in his prefaces. Introducing *The Tears of Chinese Immigrants* (1959), he writes:

I believe that many writers have before me introduced to the reader numerous accounts of the prosperity and beauty of North America.... However, in this prosperous society, some pitiable Chinese immigrants are still struggling along, degenerating in foolish pastimes, fighting with their feudal families.... Though these unfortunate Chinese do not represent a great number, they are nonetheless part of the Chinese community and their way of life deserves our attention and their sad hearts deserve our compassion. This is why I wanted to write this book.

Similarly, in the preface to *The Vagabonds*, Jang writes that he hopes this "...portraiture of Chinese immigrants in the present century...articulates the cry of their souls and reflects their unfortunate experiences" (as quoted in Chang 2). In addition, as if anticipating negative reaction from members of the community he portrays, Jang carefully disclaims any ill intention on his part:

Dear Reader, you may happen to find your own reflection in the novel. But I assure you it is only coincidence, and do not be angry with me. In fact, those characters may be found in every Chinese community (as quoted in Chang 2).

Interestingly, Bennett Lee and Jim Wong Chu, editors of a recent anthology of Chinese-Canadian writing, *Many-Mouthed Birds* (1991) make a not dissimilar (though indirect) reference to the constraints of apology in the volume's title, which they explain as follows:

The title *Many-Mouthed Birds* comes from a Chinese expression used to describe someone who talks too much. If you are a 'many-mouthed bird,' it means you do not know how to hold your tongue. You have a big mouth. You speak up when you are supposed to keep quiet. There may be nothing wrong with what you say; it may be all true. The point is, you are being indiscreet because you are saying things that you should keep to yourself, that not everyone wants to hear, that may get you into trouble" (8).

Like most of the stories in this anthology, "Prairie Night 1939" by Paul Yee is clearly framed to tell an untold story, one not everyone wants to hear: that of the Chinese sojourner, the "married bachelor" who, unable to bring his wife to Canada because of restrictions on Chinese immigration, was often forced to choose between Canada and his family. In this story, apologist Yee portrays the paralysis and pain this forced choice creates for Gordon, "a man between commitments"(48), whose anglicized name symbolizes his marginality in both his old and new worlds. In Gordon, who straddles the border between these worlds uneasily--sufficiently critical of both to avoid deeply offending readers from either space--Yee creates a vehicle well suited to the tasks of apology. Through this narrative strategy, Yee raises the reader's awareness of the injustices suffered by Chinese immigrants and highlights the complexities of the (historical) situation he portrays in a way that undermines a simple binary categorization of the characters as villains and victims, oppressors and oppressed.

Indeed, it could be argued that the writers mentioned above and many others who write about ethnic minority experience from the inside not only speak from this difficult, bifurcated position, but actually situate their work in this fraught psycho-cultural borderland, drawing discursive energy from the tensions that are generated out of its discomfiting but thematically rich overlays of conflict and ambivalence, insight and misunderstanding. This psychic space is frequently evoked through the polarities discussed in the preceding chapters, and perhaps most strikingly so in poetry since the condensation inherent in the poetic mode draws attention to the juxtaposition of opposites and contraries. Compressed but dense with complex tensions, the following short poem by Di Brant is a case in point:

Foreward

learning to speak in public to write love poems
 for all the world to read meant betraying once and for all the
 good Mennonite daughter i tried so
 unsuccessfully to become acknowledging in myself
 the rebel traitor thief the one who asked too
 many questions who argued with the father & with
 God who always took things always went too far
 who questioned every thing the one who talked too
 often too loud the questionable one shouting
 from rooftops what should only be thought guiltily
 in secret squandering stealing the family words
 the one out of line recognizing finding myself
 in exile where i had always been trying as
 always to be true whispering in pain the old
 words trying to speak the truth as it was given
 listening in so many languages & hearing in this one
 translating remembering claiming my past
 living my inheritance on this black earth among
 strangers prodigally making love in a foreign
 country writing coming home

Brandt's poem encompasses memorably and succinctly the constraints
 of ambivalence that define the apologist's position, and could be read as a
 kind of distillation of reluctance; however, as such it also contains two highly
 critical commentaries, one of the patriarchal Mennonite community, the
 other of secular Canadian society. In many of Brandt's poems, the former
 predominates, as in "When I was Five" in which the female narrator of the
 poem recalls the mixture of attraction and alienation she felt as a child trying
 to climb the barn ladder ("straight & narrow like the Bible") to the hayloft she
 thought of as heaven, where her grandfather/God presided, where "her
 mother never even tried" to climb, and where "the men in the family could
 leap up in seconds wielding pitchforks" (Brandt 374).

Although perhaps less strikingly apparent, in large measure because of
 the formal differences between poetry and fiction, a critical focus on the
 ethnic community predominates in a number of insider fictions about

ethnic community predominates in a number of insider fictions about immigrant and ethnic experience.⁴ For example, Rudy Wiebe's first novel, *Peace Shall Destroy Many* (1962) can be read as a harsh critique of certain values and dynamics in the Mennonite community, which Wiebe constructs as promoting hypocrisy and racism. The reader learns by the end of the novel that the pacifism so strongly espoused by the members of Wiebe's close-knit fictional community is actually built on a lie, one that masks a violent act in the past by their leader, Deacon Bloc, and on other lies that mask the violence in their racist treatment of the Halfbreeds who live nearby. Wiebe's fiction also questions not only whether it is possible in the contemporary age for a religious community to isolate itself from the "sinful world," but also and more profoundly, whether doing so is actually defensible within the framework of Christianity. Thus the novel's primary critical energy is directed toward the Mennonite world, rather than toward the larger Canadian society, though it also underscores the fundamental sinfulness and hypocrisy of the latter, thereby making it a kind of stern sermon (albeit in narrative form) admonishing all to re-examine their fundamental assumptions in light of Christian doctrine and change their behaviour accordingly.

Neil Bissoondath walks a similar critical line in his short story, "Dancing." Told from the point of view of Sheila, a maid from Trinidad who immigrates to Toronto to join her sister Anna and find a better life, Bissoondath's story, while drawing attention to the blatant racism in

⁴Harry Loewen, "Canadian-Mennonite Literature in the 1980s," argues that younger Mennonite writers have become increasingly critical of Mennonite tradition, and that while "it would be simplistic to suggest that all Mennonite literature of the last years is preoccupied with rebellion against traditional Mennonite norms and values," it is also true that "much of this writing is coming to terms with the Mennonite tradition" and that "The tone in their works is often defiant" (695).

Trinidad, whereby Black women like Sheila occupy the lowest rungs on the socio-economic ladder, and to the racism in Canadian society, focuses primarily on exposing the racism within Toronto's Black Trinidadian community into which Sheila moves. Forewarned by Anna's letters that Canadians are "racialist as hell" (299), Sheila, upon her arrival, is admonished further by Annie that she "...musn't think you can become Canajun. You have to become West Indian" (304). When with an outsider's eyes, Sheila suggests that perhaps Annie and her friends are unjustifiably afraid, and simply "hiding from the other people here," Annie asserts her isolationist position more vehemently:

'Girl, you have so much to learn. Remember the ad I tell you bout in my letter, the one with the little girl eating the banana pudding?'

'Yes. On the plane I tell a fella what you say and he start laughing. He say is the most ridiculous thing he ever hear.'

Annie lean back and groan loud-loud. 'Oh Gawd, how it still have fools like that fella walking around?'

'The fella was coloured, like us.'

'Even worsen. One of we own people.'

and the word is black, not coloured.....Anyways...girl, you going to learn in time. But lemme tell you one thing and listen to me good. You must stick with your own, don't think that any honky ever going to accept you as one of them. If you want friends, they going to have to be West Indian. Syl tell me so when I first come up to Toronto and is true. I doesn't even try to talk to white people now. I ain't have the time or use for racialists'(305).

While lost on Annie, the irony of her accusation that all white people in Canada are "racialists" is not lost on Sheila, nor on the reader as Bissoondath's text goes on to reveal her reverse racism and that of her friends when later, during a party in honour of Sheila's arrival, they bolster each other's sense of superiority over white Canadians and eventually angrily and very rudely refuse as being highly racist a white neighbour's quite reasonable

Sheila, the newcomer who is horrified by the attitudes and actions of Annie and her friends, Bissoondath chastises the Trinidadian community for their narrow-minded and racist approach to adapting to Canada. "I didn't know what to say," she tells the reader. I didn't want to treat nobody like that and I did not know if I could... I didn't come here to fight"(313). At the same time, however, Bissoondath indirectly criticizes Canada's M(m)ulticultural approach to cultural diversity, with its emphasis on encouraging the appreciation of difference and on cultural retention.⁵

One could point to a number of other ethnic minority fictions in which a critique of the marginal group seems as central, if not more so, to the text as does a critique of the larger society. For example, Mordecai Richler's *Son of a Smaller Hero* and *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* expose the narrowness and hypocrisy, the personal and familial failures in the fictional Jewish community where the protagonists, Noah Adler and Duddy Kravitz, come of age. Vera Lysenko's *Yellow Boots* exposes superstition, ignorance and blind devotion to patriarchal order in her fictional Ukrainian community, all of which threaten to destroy the artistic and freedom-loving soul of her female protagonist (see below). Indeed, in Lysenko's fiction, the social critique of the ethnic community and of the larger society is so finely balanced that it ultimately champions synthesis, hybridity: both societies are flawed, but by blending the best of both, one can create a better world.⁶

However, despite such examples of fictions that construct the ethnic community and the larger community so as to primarily critique the former,

⁵ Interestingly, Bissoondath has more recently made this argument rhetorically in his non fiction text, *Selling Illusions*.

⁶ Lysenko is still somewhat suspect among some Ukrainians for her negative portrayal of certain aspects of pioneer Ukrainian life. This view was expressed recently by Natalia Aponiuk in "Vera Lysenko and Lilli Landash: The Creation of a Persona through the Use of Names," a paper she presented to the Biennial Conference of the Canadian Ethnic Studies Association in Montreal on Nov. 22, 1997.

or to champion a healing synthesis of the two, the more frequent pattern is one in which the primary critique is directed toward the larger Canadian society. Nevertheless, as I have argued in previous chapters, the border-straddling apologist position from which the critique is constructed, whether directed primarily at the ethnic community, or at the larger society, is developed through binary patterns that are deconstructed to varying degrees and in various ways that inscribe the ambivalence of a territory that is "neither/nor."

Double Jeopardy

In discussing fiction as social critique in Canada, one would be remiss not to include fiction by women who write from an insider position about female immigrant and ethnic experience, both because of the numbers of such fictions and their significance. As Linda Hutcheon points out in *The Canadian Postmodern* it is hardly surprising that women writers would contribute significantly to such a critique and at the same time to a re-visioning of Canadian literature:

The fact that postmodernism values difference and ex-centricity is due in great part to the fact that feminisms (along with studies of post-colonial racism, Marxist class analysis, and gay theory, of course) pushed it in that direction... .

These two forces have come together today in their related challenges to the canon... . Both...situate themselves...in historical, social, and cultural (as well as literary) contexts, challenging conventions that are presumed to be literary 'universals', but can in fact be shown to embody the values of a very particular group of people... .

...women writers...have done much to challenge systems that 'totalize--that unify with an eye to power and control, with an eye to obliterating traces of difference (108).

What follows is an attempt to delineate some of the fundamental features of insider fictions about immigrant and ethnic experience, emphasizing fictions by women, and to suggest the nature of their critique of Canadian society. My

discussion draws on a wide reading of such fictions, but focuses on several that are, in my view, particularly significant.

If, as I have argued throughout this thesis, a postcolonial framework provides a useful context for discussing ethnic minority fiction generally, it is perhaps doubly so for such fiction by women. The colonial metaphor of centres and margins is particularly evocative of female immigrant experience, the latter having been characterized by "double jeopardy," or double vulnerability to being marginalized (colonized) on the basis of gender as well as ethnicity (McMullin). Not surprisingly, many feminist and postcolonial theorists have seen the mutual relevance of their analytical tools. Postcolonial theorists point out that "women in many societies have been relegated to the position of 'Other'.... They share with colonized races and peoples an intimate experience of the politics of oppression and repression...." Thus it is not surprising that "...the history and concerns of feminist theory, have strong parallels with post-colonial theory. Feminist and post-colonial discourses both seek to reinstate the marginalized in the face of the dominant" (Ashcroft et al. 174, 175).

My purpose here is to look at the narrative strategies that some women writers in Canada have used to represent both a perspective and an experience that has often been doubly silenced. I will discuss briefly several texts that I regard as significant attempts to resist dominant discourse. These include *The Viking Heart* by Laura Salverson, *YellowBoots* by Vera Lysenko, *The Street Where I Live* by Maara Haas, *Crackpot* by Adele Wiseman, and *Winter of the White Wolf* by Byrna Barclay. I will argue that, viewed historically, these texts constitute a progressively more assertive literary stance, one that is increasingly subversive and pluralistic. My intention is to delineate broad patterns rather than to provide detailed textual analysis.

An early "second generation" fiction that seems to me to illuminate, albeit indirectly, the double-bind nature of female immigrant experience and, perhaps particularly, the position "on-the-horns-of-the-dilemma" occupied by the female immigrant writer trying to represent that experience, is Laura Salverson's *The Viking Heart*. When it was published in 1923, Icelanders had been in Canada for approximately fifty years. Indeed, the novel is a kind of homage to the Icelandic pioneers who had settled in Manitoba in the mid-1870's, suffering great hardships, but persevering (in her fiction, as well as in historical accounts) to earn their place, not only in both the rural and urban landscapes of Canada, but also in its discourse. However, as if illustrating the point made by Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, that "... a study of the subversive strategies employed by post-colonial writers would reveal both the configurations of domination and the imaginative and creative responses to this condition"(33), Salverson, in assuming as her primary role that of apologist for her people, reveals the assumptions of Anglo-Conformity that under girded the ethnic pecking order in Canada in the early years of this century. The Empire that defined Canada was, of course, British, and all ethnic origins other than Anglo-Celtic were, to varying degrees, marginalized (Li; Palmer, *Patterns*; Whitaker; Burnet, *'Coming Canadians'*; Avery).

This "configuration of domination" is the sub-text of Salverson's portrayal of her Icelandic-Canadian characters as proud Vikings who assume mythic proportions in the struggle to make a physical and cultural home for themselves in the new world, "...with that same eagerness to venture into distant fields which characterized their Norse ancestors" (21). Bjorn Lindal's acknowledgment of the ethnic pecking order and of his disappointed hopes is made in the spirit of resistance and determination, not capitulation. Similarly, the community's Icelandic clergyman sets the mythic strength of

acknowledgment of the ethnic pecking order and of his disappointed hopes is made in the spirit of resistance and determination, not capitulation.

Similarly, the community's Icelandic clergyman sets the mythic strength of the "Norse character" against the Anglo-Canadian assessment of the Icelandic-Canadians as "inferior creatures of doubtful habit and uncertain intelligence" (107):

'A few of us are bound to lose out in this new battle but the greater part will succeed. This will be because of the children and because of that indestructibility of Norse character. Of all peoples we are perhaps the most readily assimilated. We have in all ages quickly taken on the ways and speech of whatever land we migrated to, but the traits of Norse blood are as strong today as ever.... Our children will be Canadians, but our Norse nature will remain unchanged' (111).

Clearly, the vision of ethnic relations presented in the novel is a pluralistic (if essentialist/nationalist) one that accommodates both cultural retention and identification with Canada. Interestingly, Salverson constructs this social vision as a kind of extension of the Canadian prairie landscape itself:

This is a great land...these prairies are enthralling.... Sun baked and free and rolling unhindered to the sky.... They are so wide, so vast--there is room for us all and all our opinions. They are like a broad mind, unprejudiced and open to all improvement (293).

One can see the female embodiment of heroic Norse qualities in Salverson's central character, Borga, who, having survived the typhoid epidemic that took the lives of many of her fellow emigrants soon after their arrival in Manitoba, is determined to make a life for herself in Canada. Working at first as a servant in the home of a Canadian woman, Borga determines to have a home of her own. But this agenda moves Salverson squarely into the second site of colonization: gender; and here she is less able to create an imaginative vehicle for subverting imperial structures than

as both a mythological Norse heroine and as a Canadian pioneer, even in the imaginative landscape Salverson herself has created.

As Dick Harrison has pointed out in his ground-breaking book, *Unnamed Country, the Struggle for a Canadian Prairie Fiction* (1977), in prairie novels (which Salverson's book certainly is), the house is characteristically a symbol of imperial power, both in terms of ethnicity and gender. For example, he refers to the house in Margaret Laurence's *A Bird in the House* as a symbol of the Scots grandfather, Jason Connor, and his "ponderous, imported tradition."⁷ While Salverson succeeds in putting a female voice at the centre of her fiction, and one that eventually de-colonizes ethnicity, her character remains confined in a house that is created and defined by men. Her husband, and ultimately, her son, inevitably become the vehicles through which she achieves her "home" in Canada.

About him [her son, Thor], from day to day she built her dreams. She had dreamed them once for herself, and she had learned how hard is the road of progress for a woman. She had often felt that had she been a man her opportunity might have been greater, or at least, she might have realized more easily some of the ambitions she had (62).

However, although Salverson does not succeed in de-colonizing gender, she highlights it as a problem through Borga's resentful, if resigned, asides and through her somewhat subversive portrayal of female characters. As Lorraine McMullen points out in her 1981 article on "Double Jeopardy,"

In her portrayal of her female characters, Salverson displays a duality similar to that implicit in her attitude to ethnicity. Her women are stereotypes, cast in the mould created by male authors, most of them falling into the categories of devoted

⁷ Not until later would women writers be equipped to confront the house problem directly. One of the most startlingly perceptive imaginative renderings of this struggle is Marion Engel's *Bear*, in which the female protagonist goes to live alone in the quintessential imperial house, and there confronts both British and masculine imperialism, as both exterior and interior realities.

mother or femme fatale ... (but) ... she also shows us the resentment of these women at the attitude of men toward them and at their consequent lack of opportunity.... (McMullen 55).

In portraying the circumscribed opportunities of her female characters, and the skewed values of the men in the community, which elevate the shallow and selfish Ninna simply because she is beautiful and denigrate Fru Haldora for her sharp intelligence and independent nature, Salverson points to the complex dynamics of gender-based oppression, and thus takes a first step toward de colonization. She also succeeds in placing a female character near the centre of an epic of prairie settlement; however, Borga remains somewhat off to the side in the story, dependent on her connection with husband and son for her place in this homage to Icelandic pioneers.

In *Yellow Boots*, the Ukrainian-Canadian writer, Vera Lysenko, goes considerably further than Laura Salverson in creating a subversive, pluralistic text that attempts to de-colonize both ethnicity and gender. Her first book, *Men in Sheepskin Coats* (1947), was one of the first histories of Ukrainian-Canadians to be written. So Lysenko was no stranger to the role of apologist for her ethnic community when she published *Yellow Boots* in 1954.⁸ As if quite consciously deconstructing Ralph Connor's version of Ukrainian culture in his novel, *The Foreigner*, in which Connor confidently asserts the superiority of Anglo-Saxon culture over Slavic, between which "stretched generations of moral development" (85), and portrays a "Galician" wedding as nothing more than a "sordid, drunken dance" in a "room packed with steaming, swaying, roaring dancers, both men and women, all reeking with sweat and garlic" (87), Lysenko asserts the beauty and value of Ukrainian culture, highlighting both its closeness to nature and its high artistry.

⁸ For a discussion of reaction to *Men in Sheepskin Coats* and the problems this reaction created for Lysenko, see Alexandra Kryvorochka's "Introduction" to the second (NeWest) edition of *Yellow Boots*, Edmonton. See also Beverly Rasporich, "Re-Telling Vera Lysenko."

Lysenko presents her book as an effort "to preserve something of the old beauty" which, in 1929, when the novel begins, is sadly being lost to pressure "to conform" and to "the robot uniformity of industrialization" (Author's Foreword); she includes a detailed, vivid and loving description of a Ukrainian wedding that replaces Connor's "sordid" and uncivilized "social problem" with a dazzling showcase of folk art and custom:

The plaintive notes of the violin, weeping and rejoicing in turn, resounded while Fialka [the bride] and her mother kissed each other. As the men's and women's voices combined in harmony, the pathetic music tore at Lilli's heart strings. The ceremonies were wedding poesy handed down from generation to generation, and sewn into the wreath, for there was a song for every leaf. Each scene of that wonderful drama was imprinted on Lilli's mind. She watched with mounting excitement the motions of the bridesmaid's hands, as they wove the ribbons and leaves into a wreath, singing as the wreath grew into a thing of beauty (129-30).

Unlike Salverson, Lysenko puts a female character at the very centre of her fiction, which is, as Beverly Rasporich has pointed out, a female *bildungsroman*--a re-working of a typically male-centred genre which generally traces the social education and "coming of age" of a young male character (Rasporich, "Re-Telling" 250). As well, Lysenko makes of Lilli, who eventually becomes an artist, a new-world singer of old songs, a powerful agent of multiple de-colonization. By having Lilli champion the vanishing folk culture of her people, particularly their music, Lysenko works to celebrate Ukrainian ethnicity, Ukrainian voice; by having her champion the beauty and uniqueness of individually produced works of art, Lysenko questions the valorization of efficiency underlying the forces of modernity transforming the lives of her people and the prairie landscape. By having Lilli sing not only Ukrainian folk songs, but also songs produced by a variety of immigrants, including Scots, Lysenko subverts the imperial insistence on a

unitary vision of Canadian culture and nationality. But perhaps most interestingly, particularly in comparison with Salverson's text, Lysenko is also able to create in Lilli a challenge to a significant icon of prairie culture: in L. Ricou's phrase, that of "vertical man, horizontal world"(Ricou; Kreisel, "The Prairie"). As Beverly Rasporich comments,

In presenting this vertical heroine on the horizontal plane of the Canadian Prairies, Lysenko was running counter to the literary and largely male-dominated conventions, traditions and myths of prairie fiction. If patterns of male authority and conquest have influenced the histories of the immigrant and pioneer, the official fictions of the Canadian west have similarly centered on man's struggle, to quote a commonly used phrase, 'to make his mark on virgin territory.'

.... The dominant images of the giant (male) in the vast landscape, and that concomitant one of the dwarfed man pitted against inhospitable gigantic environs, may be images rooted in the realities of pioneer experience, but the psychology of dominance is that of the collective history of the male psyche and its epic narrative expressions (251).

Lysenko de-centres this male figure, who is present in *Yellow Boots* in the character of Anton Landash, by placing Lilli at the centre of her fiction, replacing Anton's peasant pioneer boots and their "harsh rhythms" with the hand-crafted, old-country yellow boots of Zenobia, Lilli's mother. When Lilli breaks free of her father's world, where she is merely chattel to be used in his struggle to dominate the land, and when, at the end of her apprenticeship she is able to don the yellow boots and sing her "old world" songs in a new way, she becomes a new world embodiment of the ancient female earth goddess, a female creator who can link old and new and synthesize diversity through the power of a nurturing , non-dichotomous, inclusive vision.

Re-Visioning the Urban Immigrant Landscape in Female Terms

While Lysenko's effort at de-colonization through fiction is remarkably bold and successful, if one accepts it as a kind of "ethno-fantasy," it

nevertheless contains a number of uneasy resolutions of the dichotomies of immigrant and ethnic life it explores. One of these points of unresolved tension is between rural and urban values. While Lilli must move to the city to escape the tyranny of her father, she does not find there an unblemished paradise. Rather, she discovers an imperfect world, one blighted by social hierarchy, exploitation, ethnic prejudice, materialism. She also finds only male mentors who, though not at all like her rather crude, peasant father, nevertheless, attempt to control her. Nor is the sophisticated urbanity that is so important to her artistically and socially her primary creative inspiration. For that she must look to the rural prairie landscape.

Among the female writers who have attempted to take up the challenge of de-colonizing the urban immigrant landscape is Maara Haas, in her poetry, and particularly in her fictional work, *The Street Where I Live*. To fully appreciate what Haas must write against in this project, it is instructive to place her novel in what might be identified as a male tradition of portraying Winnipeg's North End as the quintessential immigrant ghetto, as I have argued in Chapter Three. Not only does she "write back" to Ralph Connor's 1909 depiction of the seamy, dangerous North End, which he contrasts with "respectable" Anglo-Saxon Winnipeg where "virtue" reigns supreme, she also provides a kind of corrective to John Marlyn's depiction of immigrant experience in *Under the Ribs of Death*. Marlyn's tone is an ironic one that forces the reader to question his protagonist's loathing of the "scabrous" immigrant ghetto that seems impossible to escape; nevertheless, his fiction portrays the ghetto and the second-generation mentality, embodied in Sandor Hunyadi--his intense, serious, psychologically damaged protagonist--as a very problematic place. Haas does not escape this problematizing of urban immigrant experience, but she handles it, in effect

attempts to de-colonize it, in a way that contrasts sharply with the strategies used by both Connor and Marlyn. And, though her narrative strategies also contrast with Lysenko's, her fiction, like Lysenko's, projects a world saved through a multiplistic, nurturing, inclusive female ethic: a sensibility that can easily bridge the gaps and potential contradictions implicit in such hybridic names as "The Virgin Mary Maple Leafs" and "The Star of David Ukrainian-Canadians."

What about Haas' de-colonization of the female position? Like the strategies of Salverson and Lysenko, a major part of her strategy is to place a female protagonist at the centre of her narrative. The humorous, seemingly over-simplified landscape of *The Street Where I live* is presented to the reader through the sensibility of a twelve year old girl. Through her young eyes and youthful, open mind, the reader is introduced to a substantial cast of diverse female characters; indeed, while men are an important part of the fictional world she creates, women dominate it as the most numerous and the most fully developed characters. Thus Haas indirectly legitimizes female presence and female power by placing female characters at the centre of her fictional urban landscape. For example, the houses on the street are presented as being the property of the female characters: when Mrs. Weinstein and Mrs. Kolosky feud, it is over "their" fences, not those of their husbands. Haas fictionalizes space for a variety of women, from the ancient grandmother, to Mrs. Britannia, and suggests that female-centred communal life and female sensibility are at the heart of what is good and enormously vital about the misunderstood and under appreciated urban ethnic community she portrays. However, as I have argued in Chapter three, while *The Street Where I Live* works on some levels to resist dominant discursive

constructions of both the urban ethnic ghetto and female ethnic experience, it does not do so as assertively and unambiguously as several more recent fictions.

Shattering Old Vessels and Illuminating Far Corners: De-Colonizing Ethnicity and Gender through Sexual/Textual Transgressions

Written in 1974, *Crackpot* by Adele Wiseman is a powerful fiction of dual de-colonization. The novel's challenge to ethnic hegemony is artfully woven out of the rich religious and cultural traditions of a Jewish heritage. *Crackpot* is imbued with several distinct yet overlapping layers of Jewish tradition. Michael Greenstein uses an historical schema to clarify these elements, delineating Wiseman's use of (1) biblical background, (2) eastern Europe, (3) immigrant transition, and (4) North American acculturation" (Greenstein, "Movement" 5). Wiseman draws on a variety of texts, both oral and written, to create a subversive and multiplistic fiction, one that, in Linda Hutcheon's words, "re-shapes" genre and tradition, thereby making space for marginalized voices. For example, the novel begins with a form and cadence that is unmistakably biblical:

Out of Shem Berl and Golda came Rahel. Out of Malka and Benjamin came Danile. Out of Danile and Rahel came Hoda. Out of Hoda, Pipick came...(7).

However, as she often does throughout the novel, Wiseman parodies the grand biblical form, filling it not with the names of the great patriarchs, but of very ordinary, humble people.

With this inter textual beginning, Wiseman not only establishes the novel's quasi-comic tone and subversive intent, but also begins to weave the complex cultural web that constitutes the many-layered context in which her characters move. The genealogical reference places the novel's Jewish

immigrant characters in the long line of inheritors of the patriarchal Judaic tradition; the parodic treatment of biblical form, which mocks elitism, adds to the complex web the tradition of egalitarian radicalism which these characters, as Eastern European, working-class Jews, influenced by the socialist movements of the nineteenth century, have inherited along with the Torah (Waddington, A.M. Klein ; Klepfisz). The biblical form is also subverted by the focus on Hoda, shifting the usual focus from patriarchy and action to maternity, knowledge and feeling. This combined emphasis on a rich cultural inheritance and on female perception and experience, apparent in the novel's first allusive lines and developed repeatedly through various features of the text, including structure, characterization, themes, tone and style, is central to the novel's power as both a critique and a re-shaper of the various texts with which it intersects.

Like the fictions by Salverson, Lysenko and Haas, *Crackpot* has a female protagonist. But by making her central character, Hoda, not only a female, Jewish immigrant, but also an obese prostitute, Wiseman creates through these multiple transgressions of imperial standards, a larger-than-life character, one who moves the fiction from the realm of mimetic realism to that of myth and/or magic realism.⁹ This enables her to connect her fiction with a profoundly subversive and multiplistic element of Jewish culture: Jewish mysticism, or Kabbala. This connection provides Wiseman with a vehicle for a very substantial societal critique.

Similar to other forms of mysticism, Kabbala "attempts to go beyond or behind traditional and established dogma, in order to satisfy the needs which

⁹ Stephen Slemon's comment in "Magic Realism as Post-Colonial Discourse" that "the characteristic manoeuvre of magic realist fiction is that its two separate narrative modes never manage to arrange themselves into any kind of hierarchy" (11) seems a particularly apropos to *Crackpot*.

certain individuals have to experience the Divine directly, without the intercession of an appointed body of 'fathers'" (Ponce 13; Fishbane 72-73).

Hoda is Wiseman's principle vehicle for exploiting this connection. Hoda's obsession with words, her paradoxical goodness, and her nurturing, female qualities, along with her spiritual progress toward a heightened, holistic consciousness, makes her an embodiment, albeit parodic, of certain kabbalistic ideas. As the "crackpot" of the title, Hoda is linked to the kabbalistic notion of the "breaking of the vessels" which is referred to in the inscription at the novel's beginning:

He stored the Divine Light in a Vessel,
but the Vessel, unable to contain the
Holy Radiance, burst, and its shards,
permeated with sparks of the Divine,
scattered through the universe.

Wiseman attributes these lines to Ari, also known as Rabbi Isaac Luria, a sixteenth-century thinker "whose speculations gave birth to modern Kabbalism" (Ponce 79). The idea of "the breaking of the vessels," known as Luria's second principle,

...has its roots ...in an Aggadatic saying that before the creation of this world God had created and destroyed many others which had not been to his liking...In this doctrine, ...Luria equates the bursting of the vessels with the death of the primordial kings of Edom. This death, Luria adds, came about because of a lack of harmony between the masculine and feminine elements.... With the breaking of the vessels everything suddenly fell into a state of chaos.... Instead of the original plan, therefore, according to which the whole of creation would have been illuminated by the light...now only certain portions are lit by the sparks and other portions are left in total darkness. This darkness is the realm of the shells, the evil in creation which would have been redeemed if all had gone as planned. Instead, the sparks which fell into the darkness became ensnared by the shells. This mingling of the sparks led to the present reality where there is no evil which does not contain some good, no good which does not contain some evil (Ponce 81, 82).

By connecting her text with Luria's in this way, Wiseman taps into an enormous network of kabbalistic ideas, parodying them on one level by embodying them in characters and situations that are at times comic or grotesque, but simultaneously using them to reinforce her central paradoxical themes, and her indirect but fundamental critique of Canadian society.

Luria's notion of the inseparability of good and evil, and the related theory that the basic law of the universe is that of opposites (Ponce 227; Fishbane 72) infuse *Crackpot*. The title itself suggests a "crazy" person, a broken, useless piece of pottery, as well as a vessel that broke only because the light it held--the essence of God--was too powerful to be contained; in breaking, it renders outside and inside meaningless, and allows even the most twisted or evil elements of the universe to be touched by divine light. Thus, through the grotesque characters of Rahel and Danile (the "craziest and most helpless" in the village), deformity and misfortune become the vehicles for creating life out of death. Danile's stories constantly emphasize that "God only seems to punish," and that "even the plague can be good for somebody" (14), since it paved the way for the birth of Hoda and their eventual journey to the new world. The ultimate paradox is Hoda. Though seemingly defiant of social convention, a prostitute who runs her business out of her home unbeknownst to her father and who ultimately has an incestuous relationship with her son, she is also in many ways the ideal devoted Jewish daughter, always mindful of her "daddy's" welfare, a good cook and a frugal housekeeper, kind to the old men at the synagogue.

Ever guided by the ethics of "right feeling," she is empathetic to the suffering of others to the point of being capable of achieving a kind of mystical identification with them--"sudden spasms of comprehension of

simultaneous worlds" (194). She constantly pursues deeper meanings and a larger social vision, vowing that "if she were a queen, she'd improve everything for everyone" (127).

This non-dichotomous metaphysics, drawn from kabbalistic thought and also suggestive of Taoist notions, is profoundly subversive of the dualistic world view so fundamental to the notions of good and evil that under gird Western culture. Closely related to this indirect critique of dichotomous thinking and the exclusivity it fosters is a critique of the patriarchal emphasis of that dichotomous vision, which sees the creative power of God in exclusively masculine terms. In kabbalistic thought, God contains a feminine principle (Ponce 28). In certain kabbalistic writings this feminine principle "is presently in a state of exile in the world." Harmony can only be achieved when there is a union and balance of the opposites, presumably of masculine and feminine, as well as of other polarities (Ponce 228; Fishbane 72). By the end of the novel, Hoda has become an iconic embodiment of the deconstruction of "manichean oppositions," of centres and margins that this metaphysics implies--a memorable and powerful challenge to the colonization of both ethnicity and gender.

De-Constructing the Wrong Plan

Although drawing on very different cultural traditions and creating a cultural landscape that is, on the surface, very different from the one that Wiseman creates in *Crackpot*, Byrna Barclay, in her interconnected novels, *The Last Echo* (1985) and *Winter of the White Wolf* (1989), constructs an equally profound metaphysical challenge to ethnic and gender hegemonies. *Winter of the White Wolf* is structurally the most innovative of all of the texts I have discussed. Barclay's shifting narrator de-centres her text in a way that cleverly marries form and content. The fiction is an epic

portrayal of the macro immigrant story--that of the interface in North America, over several centuries, of European and Aboriginal cultures--as well as a very particular story of the migration of a small group of young people from southern Sweden to northern Saskatchewan at the turn of the century; it is also the story of a search half a century later for her origins by the young Canadian descendant of those pioneers; she longs to understand the specific details of her familial and cultural story and the cultural and psychological space she occupies as a result of her ancestors' immigrant journey. Barclay's fiction is also an eloquent acknowledgment of the complex ethical questions underlying that reverberant journey and of the impossibility of its being encompassed in the limited perspective of one narrator.

Nevertheless, Barclay creates a female-centred fiction by making the third-generation searcher after origins a young woman, Annika, who is often the narrative voice, and by making the centre of her search matriarchal. It is Annika's Swedish grandmother, Johanna, whose story is at the heart of this narrative of European immigration; her image as "an outwandering woman," who leaves her homeland, crosses the ocean and ultimately drives an oxcart north to a remote region of Saskatchewan in search of her betrothed, haunts the reader (and Annika) as she attempts to make sense of both Joanna's personal story and the larger one of mass migration and cultural transformations of which it is a part.

Like both Lysenko and Wiseman, Barclay weaves into her fiction a variety of strands from her immigrant cultural background, including elements of Norse mythology, peasant custom and folklore, as well as family stories and pioneer mythology. But to this largely female-centred tapestry, she adds yet another complex strand: Aboriginal culture. The latter is also centred in female experience, since it is presented largely through the voice of

Old Woman, who acknowledges the difficulty she has in finding a voice that can be heard. "I am Old Woman, poor woman, humble woman, but I try to speak to you" (1). *Beginning Winter of the White Wolf* with Old Woman's telling of the story of "The Turtle Lake Monster" not only enables Barclay to insert a doubly marginalized voice into the complex macro-narrative of European immigration to North America, but, also, by including a very old narrative of origins, to deconstruct the Euro-centric vision of a new-world bereft of history, and of soul, both human and mythological. Old Woman describes a world that is a kind of paradise, as yet undisturbed by the disruptive European presence:

Long time ago this is happening. So long ago this is happening there is no horse to pull the travois, only dog. So long ago this is happening, it is before the whiteman crossed the water in wooden boats. First People and all the animals and birds and fish understand each other; they are brothers. They are one with the Great Spirit and now the coming together of earth and sky and water. When man goes hunting or fishing and it goes well, he prays to the Creator and thanks the lesser spirits for giving him life. He prays for forgiveness....
So long ago this is happening, there are no war leaders (1).

The next voice we hear is that of the "outwandering" Swedish immigrant, Johanna, who, like Old Woman, acknowledges the difficulty of finding a language in which she can speak clearly: "I am poor of words, not easy of them, now I have forsaken my mother tongue, nor yet fully accepted the harsh yowls of the other northland" (3). Significantly, she begins her story by acknowledging the reality of Old Woman's world ("God help me if that monster fish, that king from the sea, wasn't here when we came to this nethermost place swelling big with plans of building a new world" (3); and by questioning the version of the story that makes European man the positive agent who transformed the new-world wilderness into a blossoming paradise:

Always we ruin ourselves by building on the wrong plan. We thirst after land, bargain for a lump of it, nothing so grand as we dreamed, cutting down spruce and poplar, the men's felling calls lost and unheeded by a forsaking God.... Lost, cast away from home, now undone we kept watch on the change of the moon over our log houses.... We were too birth-proud in our Lutheran ways to heed the warnings.... Not the hail.... Not the grasshoppers...nor the Frost's giant breath.... Ah, nej, too much has already been said about the pioneering spirit, ptt! That is nothing to put in black and white or talk about one hundred years from now.... Our backs turned to the omens, we served out our God-given years. We fenced ourselves in with barbed wire. But things have a way of twisting themselves out. Like the monster fish hurtling itself out of the water, up to the sky (4).

Annika, Johanna's granddaughter, must make sense of this "twisting out"; she must return to the old country where the story begins. She must unravel Johanna's personal story and her motivation for immigrating. (Only Annika knows that Johanna always loved Arvid; that she had followed him to the new world, too proud to be left with his betrothal "money paid for waiting," marking her as forever jilted; that she had discovered his marriage to Astrid, had gone "love mad" and married his brother, Bjorn, thereby building her life "on the wrong plan"). As well, Annika must face the truth about the various dark legacies of this "wrong plan," in particular her own mother's insanity. Annika, interestingly, like Lysenko's Lilli Landash, is an artist, who must decide what to make of and do with the personal and cultural baggage that she has inherited. But Johanna is able to provide Annika with a tool--her story. The men of the family brought with them stubbornness and blindness (Arvid has only one good eye), and an inability to either love openly or speak clearly. In contrast, Johanna has been able to tell Annika the "secret" about the "wrong plan," and to leave her with the insight she needs to begin to understand and to change: "learning how to live well anywhere has to be got by task"(3).

In Barclay's fiction, the "wrong plan" at the centre of Johanna's own personal story becomes a metonym for the "wrong plan" at the centre of the collective story of European settlement of the 'new world.' Annika must take up the task where Johanna has left off. Her female vision and artistry must unravel the misbegotten story and construct a new one on the basis of a better plan, one that heeds the warning and healing voices of both Johanna and Old Woman. As Johanna tells Annika, "It will take others, perhaps you, Annika, to look with a light for some meaning out of all this" (5).

The haunting subtext of Barclay's inventive representation of female immigrant experience is that the task of de-construction and re-building facing Annika (and the reader) will be enormously difficult. It involves hearing voices that are difficult to hear as well as deconstructing many familiar structures, including discursive ones. Interestingly, in resisting dominant constructions of ethnicity, Barclay focuses not on her own group, but on Aboriginal people; and her strategy for inscribing Aboriginal culture is inextricably linked with her strategy for including the female voice, both immigrant and Aboriginal. In her fictional world, only those marginal female voices, it seems, can reveal the secret at the heart of the story of immigration: that the plan of colonization was deeply flawed and that its implementation has been profoundly destructive. Only those voices seem able to provide the vision for illuminating and acknowledging the mistake, and the spiritual strength that will be required to re-build on a new plan.

This brief sampling suggests that (insider) women writers have portrayed minority ethnic experience from the early part of this century to the present in texts that are increasingly subversive and multiplistic. And further, that they have used their "double jeopardy" position, with varying degrees of success, to de-colonize both ethnicity and gender. Drawing energy

and perspective from their combined marginalities, their fictions chip away at and occasionally shatter, the "manichean oppositions" that have "Othered" non-Anglo-Celtic immigrants, women and Aboriginal peoples in English-speaking Canada. Their fictional representation of female immigrant experience in Canada can be seen as an important, and at times even the most radical, part of the larger critique of social hierarchy in Canada that can be found in fiction by immigrants and their descendants.

Exposing the Remnants of Empire: the "new" Immigrant Writer as Social Critic

The term "new immigrants" was first used in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in North America to refer to people from eastern, central, and southern Europe who came to the United States and Canada in large numbers for the first time during those years. Both countries liberalized their immigration laws in the mid 1960s, opening the doors to yet another category of new immigrants: those from various "third world" countries of Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, and Latin America (Reimers and Troper). In Canada, this meant that after 1967, when the old national quota systems were dropped in favour of a universalistic "points system," what had been a largely European flow of newcomers, gradually, over the next two decades became one that was composed largely of non-European immigrants, many from places that were, like Canada itself, once outposts of European empire (Reimers and Troper; Seiler). The impact of these contemporary "new" immigrants on Canadian literature has been evident in recent years, in the work of such high profile writers as Rohinton Mistry, Neil Bissoondath and Bharati Mukherjee, as well as in the work many others who are less well known.

Not surprisingly, many of these writers fictionalize immigrant and ethnic experience, bringing to it a sensibility shaped by the experience of colonization in their previous homelands. Post-colonial analysis would seem particularly apropos to illuminating their fictional strategies, in part because post-colonial studies was born in the "third world" in the early 1960's and, in particular, out of the work of such pioneer activists and intellectuals as Frantz Fanon. On the basis of his and a number of other, subsequent analyses, (as well as in connection with related political movements, and the increasing presence in western society, and hence in western universities, of "third world intellectuals" (Jacoby, 33; Moore Gilbert; Chicago Cultural Studies Group), the phenomenon of post-colonial studies has been developing for thirty years, emerging "full blown" only in the last decade (Barber 1996). Thus, students of Canadian literature should not be surprised to see contemporary Canadian writers, particularly, perhaps, those from "the developing world" exploring post-colonial themes.

The British imperial order, its extensive and powerful reach, its lingering effects, and indeed, its contemporary replication in and through Canadian society, is the underlying subject of M.G. Vassanji's novel, *No New Land* (1991). Of South Asian background and an immigrant to Canada in the 1970's from Tanzania, Vassanji fictionalizes South Asian/African immigrant experience in Toronto. He depicts life in the South-Asian immigrant community ensconced in the Don Valley apartment building, Sixty Nine Rosecliffe Park Drive, and in particular the Lalani family: Nurdin--fortyish, displaced, under employed, and somewhat confused and ill-at-ease as he straddles the margins between past and present, contemporary Canada and the East-African colony of his youth; Nurdin's wife Zera--pragmatic yet intensely religious, dedicated to re-creating the old world in the new, yet also

displaced, torn between expectations shaped by another time and place and the at once frightening and exciting possibilities in Canadian life; and their children, Fatima and Hanif, the former in particular, passionately determined to find her place in the new environment, to succeed by Canadian standards. Through these characters and the spaces they inhabit, Vassanji delineates the boundaries and dynamics (geographic, economic, social, psychological, and spiritual) of Britain's nineteenth century empire and its lingering late-twentieth-century doppelganger.

His delineation reveals two closely related features of empire, hierarchy and discrepancy; that is, the hierarchy of an ethnic and racial "pecking order" with the British on the top, and the discrepancy between the inclusive rhetoric of empire, and the hierarchy which mandates degrees or levels of inclusion. Vassanji's omniscient narrator describes the sense of empire experienced by Nurdin and Zera and their families in pre-independence East Africa:

The idea of empire was relinquished slowly in the Asian communities. Right up until independence, letters would arrive addressed ostensibly to someone in the "British Empire" or "British East Africa." The Asians had spawned at least two knights of the empire in their slums, they had had Princess Elizabeth in their midst, greeted Princess Margaret with a tumultuous welcome. They spoke proudly of Churchill and Mountbatten, fondly of Victoria. What schoolboy had not heard over the radio the reassuring chimes of Big Ben before falling asleep, or the terrified voice of Dicken's Pip, the triumphant voice of Portia, the Queen's birthday message"(22, 23).

Imperial hierarchy is implicit in the delineation of centre and margin in the above passage. The reference to "letters" highlights the distance between centre and margin, while at the same time contributing to the illusion of proximity, of genuine community, that is further suggested by references to the shared institutions of nobility and monarchy, a shared literature and even

a shared time. The richly ironic reference to "the reassuring chimes of Big Ben" underscores the nature of the imperial illusion, i.e. that the cultural framework symbolized by Big Ben is somehow "natural" and proper for anyplace in the world, and furthermore that it is actually nearby, both accessible and benevolent.

That ambivalence fuels Vassanji's fine ironic treatment of imperial structures is apparent throughout the novel, as for example, in his description of the succession of empires experienced by the Asians in East Africa (who are, of course, veterans of and refugees from life in another part of the far-flung British empire). Nurdin's father, having arrived in Tanganyika in 1906 "at the time when the German government was there recruiting Britain's Indian subjects to help build the German Empire in Africa" (12), has lived a life far from Europe, but one that has nevertheless been profoundly determined by decisions made in European imperial centres. He began his career appropriately enough as an apprentice in the "old slave capital of Bagamoyo," which Vassanji describes in a way that captures the inequitable and unlikely (and hence deeply ironic) juxtapositions intrinsic to the imperial project; for example, he tells his readers that "The name Bagamoyo meant 'pour your hearts,' but no one could say what that referred to—the slaves' grief at having arrived at the market to be sold away to foreigners or simply their relief at having reached the end of the long march" (12). Further, he notes that Bagamoyo "was rivaled in eminence only by Mombasa, which was now part of the British colony to the north", and that

All roads to the interior departed from here. When Stanley went looking for Livingstone, he left from here; when Burton and Speke went searching for the source of the Nile, they too were waved off at Bagamoyo. But the Germans decided to let the old oriental capital go its way and to build a new European city, at a neglected village with the beautiful name of Dar Es Salaam,

which would come to be known as Dar. In a parallel move to the north, the British delivered the same fate to Mombasa and developed a railway depot into a European capital city Nairobi (12, 13).

This passage, with its darkly humorous depiction of a city on the margins, created from afar by the dynamics of the slave trade and asserting its claim to fame (power) through its likeness to European cities, and with its references to famous Englishmen, both of them emissaries of empire, reveals the ways in which Haji Lalani's life and that of his family and his community have been determined by the imperial "adventure," its inequitable structures, its unseeing, "Othering" gaze. Further, Vassanji suggests through Haji Lalani--the authoritarian and powerful father who "became a man of strict disposition, to whom the harsh German justice...was not alien in spirit" (13), who ruled over Nurdin's childhood and who lingers, even after his death, as a powerful presence in Nurdin's adult mind--the insidious process of internalization that makes willing subjects of the colonized.

As the years pass and Nurdin Lalani and his family are ultimately forced to leave East Africa, ironically because of the instability accompanying eventual independence from colonial rule, and to seek asylum in another part of the old empire, Canada. Their experiences on their airplane journey highlight their subordinate position within the imperial structure, and foreshadow the nature of the space they will occupy in Canada:

The Asians, for some reason, had been seated together and for their meal were all fed vegetarian. "Perhaps the meat is pork," murmured Zera. But how, in an airline of a Muslim country? They thought they were taking a friendly airline, Air Egypt, its hostesses bearing names like Farrah and Jahan. But these dyed-blond, tight-skirted, small-bottomed Farrahs disdained to look at them, and agreed to serve coffee only when the polite and timid raising of hands gave way to a few loud requests...so that a protest was seen to be brewing. And then, the embarrassments: to be told like a child how to fasten seat belts and open trays and

turn the reading lights on; searching for the toilets, trailing European passengers with your eyes, desperately, waiting until the last moment--like children--before finally plucking up courage, going there and fumbling with the bolts...and later, the complaint from the Europeans: the toilets are dirty...was Canada going to be like this: every step a mystery and trap, fraught with belittling embarrassments, and people waiting to show you up? (32)

They look forward to their brief stop in London. After all, it is a city they regard as "not a foreign place, not really, " since it is "a city they all knew in their hearts," complete with Big Ben, the Queen, David Livingstone's grave, and, significantly, literary figures as well: "the pussycat and Dick Whittington, nursery rhymes" that "clamoured in their brains" (33). However, they discover that their view of themselves as close relatives, virtually "insiders," is not shared by the British immigration officials who guard the gates of entry. The latter see them as clearly foreign," a pack of skilled and rehearsed actors from the former colonies out to steal jobs from hard-working English men and women "(33).

Once in Canada, the Lalani's find themselves in a world whose material wealth dazzles them, renders them dowdy, backward, and second class, whose doors are only partially open and whose spaces are circumscribed. Indeed, Vassanji's fictional Toronto, with its immigrant ghettos and race-conscious inhabitants, is a miniature replica of the larger empire whose peripheries it (ironically) occupies; and Sixty-Nine Rosecliffe Park, the apartment building where the Lalani's eventually live, is a miniature Dar Es Salaam. Again, Vassanji highlights the illusions and hierarchies--remnants of empire--that the nature and placement of this building and the expectations, prospects and experiences of its tenants reveal:

Sixty-nine Rosecliffe Park. The name still sounds romantic, exotic, out of a storybook or a film. Sometimes its hard to believe you are here, at this address, sitting inside, thinking

these thoughts, surrounded by luxury: the carpeting, the sofas, the telephone, the fridge, the television--yes, luxuries by Dar standards--things you could not have owned in a lifetime. The CN Tower blinks unfailingly in the distance; the parkway is incredibly beautiful at night: dotted lines of glowing lights curving in the darkness of the valley. And when it's snowing there in the night, softly, silently, whitely, you wonder if it's not a childish Christmas card you are dreaming. But then you step out in the common corridor with its all too real down-to-earth sights, sounds, and smells, and you realize that you've not left Dar far behind (59, 60).

The insecurity of their position in East Africa, evoked in the above passage, is also replicated in Toronto; this is made clear by the ugly racist incident in which Esmail, one of the members of the Sixty Nine Rosecliff Park community, is verbally and physically abused as a "Paki" by a gang of white youths at a downtown subway station. Afterward, one of Nurdin's friends laments, "The blacks kicked us out, now the whites will do the same....Where do we go from here?"(103)

That this search for a place within the remnants of empire, and the difficulty of finding it should be a theme in the work of South Asian writers such as Vassanji is not, of course, surprising. For example, it is central to poem after poem and story after story in Diane McGifford's anthology, *THE GEOGRAPHY OF VOICE Canadian Literature of the South Asian Diaspora*, (1992): Reinszi Cruz's "Bouquet to my Colonial Masters"; Arnold Itwaru's "Shanti"; Farida Karodia's "Daughters of the Twilight"; Bharti Mukherjee's "The Management of Grief"; Sam Selvon's "The Harvester."

The search for place in a neo colonial space is central to the fiction of Himani Bannerji, who immigrated to Canada from India in 1969 (Hutcheon and Richmond 145). Her story, "The Other Family" can be read as a representative, late-century "writing back" to Connor's 1909 fictionalization of the place of "foreigners" in "British North America." A short and

seemingly simple story of the stresses involved in immigrant adaptation, it depicts a young girl of Asian background who comes home from school and shows her immigrant mother a picture that she has drawn and coloured of "the family." Her mother is angered and upset by what she sees. The little girl has made "the family" blonde and blue-eyed, apparently in accordance with the teacher's instructions and in imitation of the generic picture in the child's textbook. Upset and confused by her mother's tearful response to her picture, the little girl at first reacts defiantly: "I drew it from a book...all our books have this same picture of the family. You can go and see for yourself. And everyone else drew it too!" (143). But unlike Connor's "foreigner", Kalman Kalmar, who aspires deeply to be re-made in the Anglo-Celtic image, both Bannerji's characters resist rejection and absorption. The mother's refusal to be erased in her angry insistence to the child that

'this is not your family. I, you and your father are dark-skinned, dark-haired. I don't have a blond wig hidden in my closet, my eyes are black, not blue, and your father's beard is black, not red, and you, do you have a white skin, a button nose with freckles, blue eyes and blond hair tied into a pony tail?' (143)

is ultimately actualized by the child when she insists that the teacher must add "the other family" to the picture:

'It's not finished yet,' she said. 'The books I looked at didn't have something. Can I finish it now?'

The little girl was looking at the classroom. It was full of children of all colours, of all kinds of shapes of noses and of different colours of hair. She sat on the floor, placed the incomplete picture on a big piece of newspaper and started to paint...

'It's finished now,' she said, 'I drew the rest.'

'Who are they?' asked the teacher, though she should have known. But the little girl didn't mind answering this question one bit.

'It's the other family,' she said (144,145).

Perhaps easily dismissed by some readers as too blatantly didactic, "The Other Family" can also be read as a powerful claiming of space, a bitter critique of racism and of the vision implicit in Connor's text, with its insistence that the "foreigner" must disappear.

The difficulty the formerly colonized have finding a place somewhere in the remnants of the Commonwealth is also an important theme in Rohinton Mistry's fiction and central to its social critique. For example, *Tales of Firozsha Baag* delineates the far-flung map of the empire to which Mistry's fictionalized Bombay apartment block is connected through its own little diaspora--migrants whose longings, airplane flights, letters, and gifts, (as well as devotion to various strands of western popular culture)--make Firozsha Baag a kind of metonym for India and for the developing world more generally. Energetic yet ever on the verge of chaos and decay, Firozsha Baag as a cultural and geographical space, like the migrants it exports throughout the remnants of empire, is a subordinate and often self-denigrating participant in a complex post-colonial network.

What is perhaps much more surprising than the recurring representation of lingering remnants of imperial hierarchy in the work of contemporary "new" immigrant writers, is the preoccupation with the imperial structures and attempts to subvert them in ethnic minority fiction written much before the current articulation (not to mention considerable influence on contemporary writers), of post-colonial analysis. I have suggested throughout this thesis that Ralph Connor's 1909 novel, *The Foreigner* can be read as an imperialist text, one that represents discursively both Canada's place in the imperial structure and its particular imperial responsibilities. And further, that a number of texts written later by ethnic

minority writers, write back to this empire and to Connor's discursive representation of it.

Connor's early-century fiction, like Vassanji's recent one, depicts ethnic hierarchy in geographic terms, making of Winnipeg's North End a kind of outpost of empire, a "foreign" place that must somehow be ministered to, brought into line. Connor's missionary character, Mr. Brown, like his colleagues called to the work of Christianizing Africa and Asia, virtuously shoulders the "white man's burden" as he ventures into the North End, with its "undigested foreign mass" to whom he must "teach our ways of thinking and living or it will be a mighty bad thing for us in western Canada" (Connor, 255). Beginning primarily in the 1920's, ethnic minority writers have created fiction that evokes a fraught and bi-furcated borderland space where the Anglo-Canadian centre intersects with the ethnic immigrant culture, often through Canadian-born characters who straddle the line between these two complex and evolving cultural spaces. Focusing now on the flaws of the marginalized culture, made all the more glaringly apparent by the "Othering" assumptions that construct the centre, now on the hierarchies and hypocrisies of that centre, such texts as Laura Goodman Salverson's *The Viking Heart*, F.P. Grove's *Settlers of the Marsh* (1925), Vera Lysenko's *Yellow Boots*, John Marlyn's *Under the Ribs of Death*, Mordecai Richler's *Son of a Smaller Hero* and *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*; Adele Wiseman's *The Sacrifice* and *Crackpot*, Rudy Wiebe's *Peace Shall Destroy Many*, Armin Wiebe's *The Salvation of Yash Siemens*, Frank Paci's *The Italians*, *The Father*, and *The Black Madonna*, Austin Clarke's *Nine Men Who Laughed*, Nino Ricci's *In a Glass House* (1993), among many others, highlight this post colonial space as a site of struggle over the right to social and cultural validation, the right to the subject position.

Another closely related objective in this struggle is a re-definition of identity, in both centre and margin. Double-edged social criticism becomes a tool to negotiate more inclusive cultural spaces, indeed to negotiate overlapping spaces. Among the narrative strategies these writers adapt in a variety of ways to their critique of both spaces are confession and irony, each of which deconstructs to varying degrees the socio-cultural dynamics of the status quo.

Interestingly, Vassanji's *No New Land* subverts the imperial project not only through irony, but also by opening up imperial discourse. He depicts the post-colonial landscape of Toronto as a place of incongruous juxtapositions and partial mergings that have the potential to deconstruct old hierarchies and to create new spaces, new possibilities. The novel ends on an optimistic note, with Nurdin Lalani having been cleared of the legal charges against him (that were a result of a cultural misunderstanding), and with his growing openness to Canada, but, importantly, a Canada that has also been opened to his influence. This opening up of dialogue within the discursive structures of empire is symbolized by the long awaited visit of the Muslim community's religious guru from their old home in Tanzania. Appropriately called "Missionary," he comes to bring his religious message to Canada, able at last to turn a one-sided commentary into a conversation.

However, his coming also allows Nurdin to see Missionary from a new perspective. No longer can he view him as an infallible source. "What was amazing," Nurdin reflects, "observing him now after many years, was that the man was so human. He was no ascetic. He liked food, delighted in conveniences and gadgets, and was definitely not one to spurn a car ride in favour of walking out in the cold" (190). Further, Nurdin realizes that Missionary had personal problems and limitations like everyone else. That

his own son had refused his counsel, and married his American girlfriend completely against his advice makes him vulnerable, human in Nurdin's eyes. Seeing *Missionary* from the perspective of his Canadian experience allows Nurdin to exorcise some of the rigidities of his religious and cultural background, as embodied in memories of his difficult, authoritarian father. *Missionary's* visit opens up new ways of seeing both the past and the future:

Missionary had exorcised the past, yet how firmly he had also entrenched it in their hearts. Before, the past tried to fix you from a distance, and you looked away; but *Missionary* had brought it across the chasm, vivid, devoid of mystery. Now it was all over you. And with this past before you, all around you, you take on the future more evenly matched (207).

Thus, *missionary's* presence transforms the socio-cultural landscape, thereby not only reversing the direction of imperial influence, but also by creating space and a future in Canada for the Lalani's and the rest of their Sixty Nine Rosecliffe Park community. In so doing, Vassanji's text joins a growing body of fiction in Canada by ethnic minority writers that "...has contributed to the widespread interrogation of the history and presuppositions of ...dominant discourse" in Canada "...particularly in its relation to Western imperialism in both its colonial and neo-colonial phases" (Young 126). Taken together, they have, over the past century and particularly since the Second World War, subverted a univocal discourse, replacing it with a multiplicity of narratives and voices; they critique the hierarchies implicit in Canada's particular legacy of empire; and they unsettle the imperial gaze by placing those marginalized by that gaze at the centre of their own stories.

CONCLUSION

That the writing and reading of literature cannot be understood without reference to the historical, political, social, and cultural milieus in which it is written and read is one of the key insights offered by critical theorists over the past thirty years or so, including, in varying ways, structural, post structural, feminist, postmodernist and post colonial theorists. The structuralist project of de-centering the subject, the feminist critique of the variously effected marginalization of women, the postcolonial interrogation of the relationship between (neo) imperialism and European constructions of knowledge about other cultures--all have directly or indirectly insisted on this point (Cultural Studies Group; Moore-Gilbert; Young). The complex relationship between literary texts and the various features of the culture in which they are produced and read is graphically illustrated in the history over the past century of the writing and reading in Canada of what has been identified (as noted in the Introduction) by a variety of terms, including ethnic literature, ethnic minority writing, literature of lesser diffusion and multicultural literature. The connection between the literary texts so designated and Canadian culture is apparent, not only in the dilemmas of displacement, particularly those surrounding language, audience and cultural resonance, that have faced immigrant and/or ethnic writers, but also in the structural and thematic features of the literature they have produced and in the way literary critics have received it.

Since contextualizing my project seems essential to drawing "conclusions" about it, I begin this section with an overview of the discursive structures, "different systems, institutions, forms of classification and hierarchies of power" (Young 124) that have to some considerable degree

determined the production, characteristic features and reception of ethnic minority texts in Canada, looking briefly at key features of the "ethnic voice" and of the critical responses to it. Clearly, these interrelated discourses have been shaped, throughout the twentieth century, by the broader socio-political contexts in which they have been fashioned. Moreover, viewed as a strand in a larger construction of nation, the literary critical response to ethnic minority writing and the discourse of ethnicity in the wider society as reflected in discussions of public policy, are remarkably similar. To illustrate this discursive kinship, I discuss briefly that "larger" social discourse, and some of the ways that critical response reinforced it.

A few samples of public discourse from the formative period of the great immigration boom in western Canada in the early years of the century, are instructive.¹ Voicing a widely held sentiment about the importance of Canada's imperial connection, the editorial writer for the Edmonton Bulletin proclaims that "The ideal of the west is not only greatness, but greatness achieved under the British Flag and stamped and moulded by the genius of race"(1906). As if anticipating the question of where non-Anglo-Saxon immigrants would fit in such a West, the editor of the Macleod Gazette, referring to the influx of Ukrainian settlers to Alberta, uses (1900) the phrase "...promiscuous foreign immigration." Similarly, in that same year, the editor of the Calgary Herald questions the wisdom of an immigration policy that allows into Canada "dirty hordes of half-civilized Galicians who came lacking everything but dirt."

"What is this country coming to? Doukhobors pouring in by the thousands on the eastern slope, Galicians swarming over the central portions, and rats taking possession of Dawson City, one would imagine that Canada had become

¹The following quotations are taken from Howard Palmer, Patterns of Prejudice: A History of Nativism, pp. 23-33.

a veritable dumping ground for the refuse of civilization....We have at present in the Canadian-northwest enough and more than enough foreign matter to be assimilated if we are to preserve a preponderating British tone." (1900)

The editor of the Edmonton Bulletin likewise objects (1898) to allowing non-Anglo Saxon immigrants into Canada. Referring to the coming of Doukhobors and Ukrainians, he asserts: "This may be Christianity, philanthropy, charity or any other of the virtues, but it is not immigration." In the context of the public debate as to whether or not Alberta should follow British Columbia's example and disenfranchise the small numbers of Chinese and Japanese in the province, a Lethbridge Herald editorial notes (1907), "We do not want people without our ideas of civilization, without our ideals of government, without our aspirations as a province and a nation to bear any part in the election of our representatives. We have enough poor stuff in the voting class now." In the same vein, and following the example of Conservative leader Robert Borden, who in the 1908 election made an issue of "Oriental" immigration, a Conservative candidate asks: "Is Canada to remain under the control of the white races or are we to see Canada overruled by the Mongolians who work for starvation wages on which a white man could not exist?"

In this characteristic deliberative discourse of the period, the degree to which a particular group of immigrants was perceived to be like or unlike Anglo Canadians is clearly the measure of its acceptability. For example, editor of the Edmonton Bulletin, Frank Oliver points to their similarity to "Anglo-Saxons" to justify the presence of German immigrants, noting that like the former, "the German immigrant was 'a man of dominant race, of untiring energy, of great foresight;...of the highest character.'" Similarly, writing in defense of the Mormons, whose unorthodox religious views were

causing some public concern, Emily Murphy in 1911 points out that after all, "They are Anglo Saxons....in the end (they) will swing into true balance because of the fine sanity and finer sense of justice that go to make up the bed rock principles of the race." This belief in the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon "race" was augmented by the related belief in the superiority of the British Empire, and in the absolute rightness of Canada's alignment with it. Fredelle Bruser Maynard, recalling her childhood and education in western Canada during the 1920's remembers the role the widely used textbook series, the Nelson Readers, played in emphasizing both of these notions:

I remember the dog. He was a Spitz, I think, or a mongrel with a Spitz tail, and he balanced on his hind legs on the cover of the Canadian Primer. There was an old woman, too--I learned afterward that she was Mother Goose--contained, like the dog, within a sharp black circle. The angle of the old lady's scarf, blown forward with stiffly outthrust fringe, suggested wind, but the world of the figures was windless...What was she saying, her pointing finger outlined against the sculptured scarf? Surely nothing so insipid as 'Bow-wow-wow, whose dog art thou?' Momentous as an Egyptian hieroglyph on the door of an unopened tomb, the picture haunted me through all the hours in prairie schoolrooms...Perhaps it was only when I left the Canadian Readers, in grade six, that I knew for sure the message frozen on those parted lips. The voice of the reader was the voice of the Union Jack (175-6).

Maynard goes on to note that among the authors included in the reader, "(I)mperialists abound. Kipling, Edward Shirley, Sir Henry Newbolt, Canon F.G. Scott blow their bugles mightily" with such verses as "'Children of the Empire, you are brothers all;/ Children of the Empire, answer to the call;/ Let your voices mingle, lift your heads and sing/ God save dear old Britain, and God save Britain's King'" (176). She also notes that "...the world of the readers was limited" to a "peculiarly English class consciousness" and displayed a rather astonishing "indifference" to people from other places. In the world of the texts, she notes, "There is the British Empire, and beyond that a wasteland

inhabited by funny little people like Oogly the Eskimo and Ning Ting 'away over in an eastern country called China', and in Japan, which "is a place where 'there isn't a sofa or chair'"(178).

A number of other texts from the period corroborate Maynard's recollection of the imperial theme. For example, in 1928, Leader of the Opposition, R. B. Bennett, spoke forcefully in the House of Commons on the problems generated in the United States by its "a polyglot population without any distinctive civilization," a situation Canada would most definitely want to avoid:

...we are endeavouring to maintain our civilization at that high standard which has made the British civilization the test by which all other civilized nations in modern times are measured... .

(and while)These people (non-British immigrants) have made excellent settlers...it cannot be that we must draw upon them to shape our civilization. We must still maintain that measure of British civilization which will enable us to assimilate these people to British institutions, rather than assimilate our civilization to theirs... .We earnestly and sincerely believe that the civilization which we call the British civilization is the standard by which we must measure our own... we desire to assimilate those whom we bring to this country to that civilization, that standard of living, that regard for morality and law and the institutions of the country and to the ordered and regulated development of this country... . That is what we are endeavouring to do, and that is the reason so much stress is laid upon the British settler...as indicating that standard of civilization on which we build our institutions (as quoted in Palmer, Immigration 119).

Nor had this widely held view changed drastically in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War. Speaking in the House of Commons in 1947, Prime Minister MacKenzie King, while rescinding certain features of the Chinese Exclusion Act, notes that "(T)here will, I am sure, be general agreement with the view that the people of Canada do not wish, as a result of mass immigration, to make a fundamental alteration in the character of our

population. Large scale immigration from the Orient would change the fundamental composition of the Canadian population"(King as quoted in Palmer, *Immigration*, 47).²

What these fragments of public discourse from the first half of the twentieth century, along with those produced by such liberal reformers as J.S. Woodsworth (*Strangers Within Our Gates*), Ralph Connor (*The Foreigner*), Nellie McClung (*Painted Fires*) share is a British colonial version of social and ethnic hierarchy and a British imperial map of the world.³ Together, they create a position from which the Anglo-Canadian writer is virtually limited to constructing the ethnic other as a "problem." The words and phrases, the point of view, the assumptions embedded in this public discourse of ethnicity and nation reflect the complex colonial inheritance of Anglo Canadian culture, with its paradoxical blend of arrogance and self-deprecation, the perhaps inevitable legacy of Canada's two great dependencies: the first on Great Britain, the second on the United States (Ross; Ramirez; Reimers and Troper). The first required a discourse of metropolitan deference, the second a related discourse of defense.

The relationship between power, prestige, and ethnicity in early-twentieth-century Canada is apparent in the turn-of-the-century imperialist rhetoric (and the related selective policy with regard to immigration) that linked the new nation's potential greatness with that of the British Empire

² It was not really until the 1960's that the public discourse of ethnicity and diversity changed markedly, as registered, for example, in the revised immigration policy of 1967 in which "any and all vestiges of racial and ethnic discrimination were finally and officially expunged from Canadian immigration regulations and procedures" (Troper, "Canada's Immigration Policy Since 1945," 197).

³ This is not to suggest, of course, that the British are somehow uniquely predisposed to imperial behaviour. Clearly, the United States is the contemporary imperial power par excellence. (See, for example, Said, *Culture*, 282-95). Perhaps, as Diana Brydon points out ("Commonwealth or Poverty") it is useful to avoid "...the false nationalisms that identify Britain, rather than the imperialist structure of capitalist relations as the enemy"(11).

(Palmer, *Immigration*; Berger;), and relegated the thousands of potential Canadians from central and eastern Europe who settled much of western Canada between 1896 and 1914, to the status of "foreigners" (Kostash), to say nothing of the Asian and South Asian and Black immigrants who have in various ways been excluded and discriminated against over the century. The cultural corollary in English Canada to the discourse of imperialism, that of Anglo-conformity, turned non-British (and non-French) ethnicity and racial difference into problematic otherness that would have to be gradually removed from Canadian society through the formidable assimilative tools of school, church and various kinds of low status, the latter including a de-valuing of all aspects of "foreign" cultures, including language and of course literature written in these "foreign" languages, or later, literary and historical texts that were written in English but grounded in and focused on what might be called the "ethnic immigrant experience" (Palmer, *Patterns*; Ramirez).⁴

Ironically, this privileging of British culture within the historical development of English-speaking Canada was in many ways heightened by the gradual demise of the British Empire and rise of the American (Clement; Meisel; Smith). The counter-revolutionary choice at the heart of British North America predisposed Canada to a tendency to define itself against the United States; the British connection was the publicly accepted antidote for chronic overexposure to the omnipresent Yankee, and as the power of the latter increased, the former continued to be called upon, despite its waning potency.

⁴ The necessity of using this qualifying phrase, "ethnic immigrant experience" clearly reveals the privileging of certain immigrants over others; some immigrants are regarded as "ethnic" while others (those who are white and British, or perhaps white and American) are not.

Thus, Canada largely rejected, though with some ambivalence, the egalitarian and nation building assumptions that, however imperfectly put into practice, were central to the Americans' universalistic melting-pot approach to the conundrum of North American national building: how to create a reasonable degree of political unity out of enormous ethno-cultural diversity (Hoerder). During the early years of the century, Canada's rejection was grounded in a discourse of reflected power as well as of derivative cultural superiority (Palmer, "Reluctant Hosts"; Craig; Ramirez; Padolsky, "Canadian Ethnic Minority Literature"; Avery). Only the latter discourse of cultural superiority remained by the mid twentieth century, generating a schizophrenic public discourse with regard to the United States (produced by the literary as well as the political establishment) that was at once arrogant and self-effacing, a projection of Canada's political, social and cultural marginality and insecurity. This ambivalence at the heart of public discourse also had been shaped and intensified by the historical and continuing presence of French Canada (Mandel, Introduction; Ross). In short, prior to the reinterpretation of Canada's past that was effected during the 1960's and early 1970's through the public discourse that developed, proclaimed and perpetuated Canada's Official Languages Act and its official Multicultural Policy, the dynamics of imperialism in Canada--both American and British--had spawned and perpetuated the privileging of particular "founding" (European) ethnicities; and it was, in large measure, this privileging that generated and legitimized the vertical mosaic in Canada.

Ethnic hierarchy was both the shaper and the product of a colonial perspective, what Frye termed the "garrison mentality," the product of Canada's particular geography and history (Frye, Conclusion; Atwood, *Survival*; MacGregor). Changes in the content of this public (Anglo

Canadian) discourse--from the most ethnocentric demands for conformity to the ideals of "British civilization" prior the 1930's; to the cautious liberalism of the postwar era, which granted a certain legitimacy by virtue of its being colorful (the result of being formerly illegitimate) and perhaps even revitalizing, to a primarily European ethnic mosaic; to the legitimation and institutionalization of an ethnically and racially diverse, if two-tiered pluralism in the policy of "multiculturalism within a bilingual framework"--can be read as both catalysts for reflections of a transformation of the assumptions under girding the interconnected discourses of ethnicity and nation in Canada (Craig; Verhoeven; Ravvin). That is, public discourse, arguably into the 1930's, confirmed Canada's alignment with the British empire and until somewhat after the Second World War, it did the same for Anglo-Canadian privilege. In this discourse, Anglo-Canadian ethnicity paradoxically disappears as it becomes the position from which all others are judged. Its representation of "the other ethnic groups" is not unlike the West's representation of 'the Orient' in the manner that Said delineates in *Orientalism*. In both cases, the Other is constructed as "backward," which justifies the entire project of dominance/assimilation in the interests of reaffirming the 'natural' superiority of hegemonic values and structures.⁵

From this national discourse of Anglo-conformity come not only the now mostly buried pejoratives, ("hunky," "wop," "chink," etc.) but also such seemingly neutral bureaucratic phrases as "non-official languages," "other ethnic groups," and more recently, "multicultural groups," "heritage groups," "heritage languages" and the like. All of these terms mark ethnicity

⁵ One is reminded here of the important point made by several analysts that discrimination *within* Western liberal societies can be seen as a form of colonialism. As Robert Young points out, the postcolonial critique of humanism has included the argument that such violence against the internal Other--even the Holocaust--is not simply an aberration, "rationalism gone, wrong," but rather "colonialism brought home to Europe" (125).

in Canada as a site of struggle, and, while the latter terms suggest an increase in the negotiating power of minority ethnic groups, they nevertheless still bear the traces of an earlier discourse of exclusion.

It was arguably resistance of this ethnic privilege (and hence hierarchy) at the heart of Canadian society by the increasingly numerous and powerful "third force" of "other ethnic groups" whose 'coming to voice' provided the momentum behind the discourse of multiculturalism that emerged in the 1960's (Burnet, *Coming Canadians* Chapters 8, 12; Kallen 57; Mazurek; Lupul; Lucyk). A new and potentially very radical conceptualization of Canadian society, official Multiculturalism was, not surprisingly, adapted to Canada's existing discursive structures, the legacy of its complex colonial history: English-French duality (however grudgingly acknowledged historically by English-speaking Canadians) and a closely related hierarchical rather than egalitarian concept of ethnicity, combined with a complex anti-Americanism.⁶

⁶ Kas Mazurek in "Defusing a Radical Social Policy: The Undermining of Multiculturalism" sees Multiculturalism in much the same way as I am suggesting here. He argues that its introduction represented "one of the most elevating and enlightened moments in Canadian history" because it was the first such policy in the world to "actively promote intercultural harmony and ethnic/racial equality" (17) and as well to work toward advancing the material conditions of those disadvantaged by Canada's socio-economic hierarchy. However, it's force, he argues, has been undermined somewhat and it faces constant criticism, primarily because it "was a genuinely radical social vision that was soon seen to constitute a threat to the hierarchical status quo in Canada" (20). See also Evelyn Kallen, M.R. Lupul and Greg Gauld for similar assessments. Of course, the policy has been widely criticized from a variety of perspectives, e.g. R.W. Bibby, *Mosaic Madness*; N. Bissondath, *Selling Illusions*; R. Ogmundson, "On the Right to be a Canadian"; K. Peter, "Multicultural Politics," to name but a few. The idea has also been criticized by some postcolonial thinkers for creating a discourse that ultimately destroys difference by making various groups merely interchangeable parts of an ultimately oppressive/assimilative system. See for example Himani Bannerji, "On the Dark Side of the Nation: Politics of Multiculturalism and the State of 'Canada'". See Christian Dufour, "The Unthinkable and the Quebec Heart" for an interesting (and relevant) analysis of Quebec's place in the "English-Canadian" imagination. As for the complex nature of Canada's anti-Americanism, one might argue that historically, it was based on Canada's colonial position vis a vis Britain, but that since the rise of the American empire, this earlier sentiment has been augmented and complicated by a postcolonial resistance of American colonization of Canada.

Thus, it is not surprising that insider fictions about immigrant and/or ethnic experience also reveal a strong sense of ethnic hierarchy and margin/centre tensions. As I have discussed in some detail in the preceding chapters, in the 1970's and 1980's, critics such as Robert Kroetsch and Eli Mandel noted this "binary pattern," an essential "schizophrenia" that was characteristic of the "ethnic voice" in Canada. One can see this in the novels and stories that are the focus of this study: texts by such writers as Mordecai Richler, Frank Paci, Caterina Edwards, Austin Clarke, Rohinton Mistry, Joy Kogawa, Cyril Dabydeen, Guy Vanderhaeghe, and many others. All of these writers represent their immigrant and/or ethnic characters as having a strong sense of being outside of the privileged centre, of playing the Other to the Anglo-Canadian subject.

As suggested earlier, ethnic hierarchy has been at the centre not only of public discourse about immigration and diversity in Canada, and arguably of the "ethnic voice" in fiction, but also of the critical reception given the literary texts produced by those outside the privileged centre. Indeed, the term "ethnic literature" is itself a reflection of the ethnic hierarchy that is at the core of Canadian social, economic, political and cultural history. One can read this in the history of critical response to "ethnic" literature, in terms of both presence and absence. For example, a comprehensive survey of this history, i.e. one that includes the critical response from within various minority groups, as presented for example in the "ethnic press," or through other vehicles of response within the institutional frameworks of particular immigrant and/or ethnic groups has yet to be written. With regard to response from the mainstream Canadian literary establishment, one can say more. Although one needs to be sensitive to shifts over time and to the differences in response to texts in English and those written in other

languages, in general until relatively recently, the reception has been (with few exceptions) most notable by its absence. Indeed, one might change the context in which the comments of the editorial writers quoted earlier were made to a literary one, and encapsulate the nature of critical response, particularly prior to the Second World War, in the following paraphrase: "This may be writing, but it is not literature, and it is certainly not Canadian." A turning point, the war itself and its sociological consequences in Canada precipitated significant challenges to Anglo-centricity, as did the related changes in Canada's immigration policy during the 1960's that ultimately increased dramatically the diversity of Canada's population (Reimers and Troper).

However, prior to the effects of these ultimately transformative post-war developments (many of which are related to the changes in the intellectual climate described in the Introduction), both deliberative and critical discourse was based on hierarchical assumptions about ethnicity. With the exception of the work of Watson Kirkconnell, who with his 1935 anthology, *Canadian Overtones* (translations of poetry written by "new-Canadians" in languages other than English and French) and his section on "New Canadian Letters" in the *University of Toronto Quarterly* (which he wrote from 1937 to 1964), English-Canadian literary critics ignored the substantial body of "émigré" literature being produced in Canada by writers working in Ukrainian, Hungarian, Icelandic, Yiddish, Italian, and a number of other languages. Nor did they seem any more willing or able to focus on the works written in English by second-generation "ethnic" writers such as Vera Lysenko, Laura Goodman Salverson and John Marlyn. Even when critics read such ethnic minority writers, they usually 'misread' it in one of two ways. Either they would emphasize its exotic nature, thereby relegating

it, in the way that Canada's hierarchical approach to ethnicity has tended to do with "visible ethnicity" in a number of realms of political and social practice, to the category of the colourful, the esoteric, and by implication, the irrelevant, somehow completely outside what was seen as the emerging Canadian literary tradition (Aponiuk, *Ethnic Literature*). Or they would politely ignore its ethnic particularity, indirectly acknowledging the subordinate position connected with ethnicity.

However, critical reception of texts by the "ethnic other"-- like Canadian society itself--has changed dramatically. The enormous increase throughout the twentieth century in the diversity of Canada's population ultimately helped to force a re-evaluation of the discourse of national identity and of public policy with regard to pluralism. Similarly, the increased presence of minority ethnic voices--among both writers and critics in Canada, along with the not unrelated insights offered by various scholarly discourses, including those of ethnic studies and post-colonialism, has contributed to a re-configuration of Canadian literature: one that has de-centered what was formerly regarded as the "mainstream"--a term which is fast becoming an historical artifact (Davey; Melnyk, *A Literary History*). Despite its vulnerability to criticism from a variety of perspectives, multiculturalism, both as official policy and as a general social perspective, has arguably had a powerful transformative impact on national discursive structures, helping to subvert the older discourses of Anglo-conformity in English-speaking Canada and thereby allowing for a re conceptualization of Canadian society, and for the growing power of a discourse of pluralism. Similarly, the critical framework provided by the combined insights of feminist, postmodernist, cultural studies and post-colonial praxis, though by no means constituting the final word on the reading and writing of literary texts, is one that is arguably

more receptive to marginal voices than ever before, providing yet another site for interrogating the kind of ethnocentrism that had previously prevented critics from hearing the "ethnic voice."

Not surprisingly, a few commentators lament the persistence of the old ethnic hierarchy, and its continuing power to determine the critical reception of literary texts. For example, Natalia Aponiuk, in her introduction to a recent literary issue of *Canadian Ethnic Studies* points to "the continuing marginalization of ethnic minority writers and their exclusion from the mainstream of Canadian literature to the detriment of both the writers and the larger literary tradition." While doubtless, one can find evidence of this persistence, of writers, critics and readers who "retain(s) a fundamental imaginative relationship with the imperium" (Fawcett as quoted in Brydon, *Commonwealth* 8), it seems to me that in many ways, the contemporary cultural economy in Canada, both in terms of broad social and intellectual forces, has become quite remarkably inclusive (particularly in the last decade or so) of the work of ethnic minority writers. As I hope I have shown in the previous chapters, this new social and intellectual climate is not unrelated to the work of the writers I have discussed. Over the century, their fictions (along with various other kinds of cultural, political and social activism) have broadened and enriched Canada's collective literary voice, as well as ultimately demanding a more enlightened reading of Canadian literature.

That not only Canadian literature per se has become increasingly polyphonic, but that the critical response to it has become much more receptive in recent years is apparent to any interested frequenter of the literary sections in Canadian libraries and bookstores, or to anyone caring to look at changes in course offerings and reading lists at a variety of educational institutions. It is also apparent in the growing number of "academic"

volumes devoted to analyzing some aspect of cultural pluralism, including volumes devoted to literary criticism. For example, over the past decade Canadian Literature (arguably the major 'mainstream' academic journal for the subject) has devoted a number of special issues to "minority literatures," and in just this past year, at least three academic journals in Canada have produced special multicultural literary issues, to say nothing of the numerous journals and books produced in other countries.⁷ Similarly, the area of Aboriginal or Native Studies, including the writing and reading of literature, has grown enormously in recent years. A large number of texts have been produced, including several devoted to literary criticism, such as Jeanette Armstrong's *Looking at the Words of Our People: First Nations Analysis of Literature*. It seems clear, then, that we are witnessing major changes in the discourse that has constructed Canadian nationhood, Canadian culture, Canadian identity in English-speaking Canada.⁸

This deconstruction of the old ethnic map (the two solitudes/the vertical mosaic) that defined Canada in the past will, I believe, ultimately strengthen Canada's self-confidence as a postcolonial nation, not only because it will revitalize Canadian culture by defining it more inclusively, thereby opening space within it for new voices and perspectives, but also because forcing self-reflexivity on the heretofore privileged voice in English-speaking Canada may well pave the way for discarding the colonial habit of mind and for asserting the legitimacy and strength of Canada's unique positioning in regard to both national and global discourses of pluralism. An important and

⁷ See *Journal of Canadian Studies* 31.3 1996; *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 28.1 1996; *Mosaic* 29.3 1996.

⁸ One could make a similar statement about Quebec and other regions of French-speaking Canada. One recent article that addresses the literary dimension of pluralism in Quebec is Sherry Simon and David Leahy, "La recherche au Québec portant sur l'écriture ethnique," pp. 387-409. See also M. Beheils, Quebec and the Question of immigration: From ethnocentrism to ethnic pluralism, 1900-85.

positive part of this process has been the blurring of the us/them binary, which has opened up Canadian discursive space for a multiplicity of perspectives and stories: part of the broader enterprise of constructing an inclusive "imagined community" for a diverse population (Anderson).

In my view, the enlightened critic of Canadian literature will not ignore ethnicity despite the several reasons for doing so, including a habit of mind inherited from the historical privileging in Canada of certain "ethnicities" over others, as well as a too narrowly "literary" framework of analysis, one that excludes the tools and insights of a variety of theoretical perspectives. Certainly the insights connected with the study of ethnicity have clarified the relationships between literary production and social power in Canada; post-colonial theory and practice have helped to reveal more clearly than ever before the ways in which a western European bias has in large measure constructed the discursive world we inhabit, and the ways in which this discursive machinery reproduces dominant political and social hierarchies. While these insights entail a loss of old certainties that may be seen as threatening by the traditionalist, both in the realm of public policy and of literary criticism, I see this loss as the basis for a welcome, invigorating revolution in the ways that Canada can be imagined. Or, as literary critic Linda Hutcheon says of the paradigm shift connected with postmodernism,

This phenomenon does betray a loss of faith in what were once the certainties, the 'master' narratives of our liberal humanist culture. But that loss need not be a debilitating one. In postmodernist literature, as in architecture, it has meant a new vitality, a new willingness to enter into dialogue with history on new terms. It has been marked by a move away from fixed products and structures to open cultural processes and events. There has been a general (and perhaps healthy) turning from the expectation of sure and single meaning to a recognition of the value of difference and multiplicity, a turning from

passive trust in system to an acceptance of responsibility for the fact that art and theory are both actively 'signifying' practices--in other words, that it is we who both make and make sense of our culture." (Hutcheon, p. 23)

Clearly, then, time is ripe for those in Canada engaged in the complex process of making sense of where we are and who we are, to attend to a multiplicity of voices, including the "ethnic" voices in Canadian literature that were too long ignored by literary critics.⁹

But what about the problematic positioning of national discourses, including national literatures, more generally that is inherent in the way I have situated my topic at the intersection between a national and a postcolonial discursive framework? Perhaps the first problem is that, as Benedict Anderson makes clear in *Imagined Communities*, his important analysis of nationalism, there is a fundamental tension between discourses of 'nation' and discourses of inclusivity. The nation, by its very nature, is

"...limited because even the largest of them (nations)...has finite, if elastic boundaries, beyond which lie other nations. No nation imagines itself coterminous with mankind. The most messianic nationalists do not dream of a day when all the members of the human race will join their nation in the way that is was possible, in certain epochs, for, say, Christians to dream of a wholly Christian planet"(7).

But the processes of nationalism that move it in both of the directions implied in Anderson's assertion--that is toward exclusivity on the one hand and inclusivity on the other--have been the same processes that have fueled imperialism, with its valorization of the nation at the centre of empire, however its boundaries are drawn, and of the rightfulness of its domination over others, of the complex Othering apparatus created by its inseparable,

⁹ Again, one is reminded of the view that, as Stephen Slemon has argued, postcolonialism is best thought of as a transformative reading practice rather than as a body of texts. See for example his "Monuments of Empire," pp. 1-16.

powers of inclusion and exclusion. Thus, the nation is a problematic space for many postcolonial analysts, as are national literatures, which can be seen as integral features of colonialism. Hommi Bhaba, for example, has argued that

(N)ational quests for cultural self ratification and hence origination replicate imperial cognitive processes, reinvoking their values and practices in an attempted constitution of an independent identity...the construction of the 'essentially' Nigerian or the 'essentially' Australian invokes exclusivist systems which replicate imperial universalist paradigms (as quoted in Padolsky, Olga 20).

And, as I have pointed out in the introduction, it is precisely around this issue of reductionism/essentialism, in part as it relates to the nation, that a number of Canadian critics return the compliment by interrogating the application of postcolonial theory to Canadian literatures. Arun Mukherjee has argued that the centre-periphery emphasis of postcolonialism seems a crude, essentializing instrument that "prohibit(s) any exploration of ...power struggles *within* postcolonial communities" (6), and any appreciation that not all postcolonial writing is directed 'back' to the centre. Drawing on Mukherjee's plea for a more nuanced analysis that begins with what is actually happening on "home ground," Marie Vautier finds the postcolonial paradigm inadequate for illuminating the complex Self/Other tensions in the "multi-tiered postcolonial situations in English-speaking Canada and Quebec" (11). Joseph Pivato raises similar questions about applying "imported" theory (including postcolonial theory) to ethnic minority writing in Canada, noting that particular group experiences and dynamics have been central to the "narratives of ethnic minority writers" whose attempt to represent the "reality" of those experiences has been hard fought:

This questioning of theory by some ethnic minority writers; this reluctance to abandon the conventions of classical realism is as

much a political position as a literary tendency. Many of us are well aware that our subject positions are discursively constructed, and we want to determine the discourse, since it is the location of our resistance (37).¹⁰

Enoch Padolsky is also wary of postcolonial theory as a foreign import that does not adequately fit the national landscape, and does not draw on the discourses of difference that have been developed within Canadian space, arguing that postcolonial analysis is much more narrow, less interdisciplinary than the discourse of ethnic studies that has been developed in Canada over the past twenty five years. For Padolsky, postcolonialism "...excludes all consideration of ethnic groups as groups, of problems that communities face in trying to remain communities, or of the rich inter-group social and political history that a national framework implies" (Olga 25).

Seeing the value of both paradigms for illuminating the literature I discuss, I have quite consciously situated my project on the discursive border between the national(ist) discourses of Canadian literary studies/Canadian studies/Canadian Ethnic studies that Padolsky champions, and the arguably post-national discourse of postcolonialism. Is such a position defensible? Clearly, in my view, the answer is yes, based first, on my perception of the particular nature of Canadian postcolonial space, and second on my view of the kind of reconfiguring of cultural and political formations needed to foster the more just, more equitable, more respectful world implicit in both the postcolonial and ethnic studies critiques. I find support for my position from a number of sources. Edward Said, for example, takes a similar borderland position. On the one hand he clearly problematizes national literatures and

¹⁰ Interestingly, it is around just this issue that at least one analyst distinguishes postcolonialist literary production from postmodernist, noting that the former "...would want to allow for the positive production of oppositional truth-claims... It would retain for post-colonial writing, that is, a mimetic or referential purchase to textuality and it would recognize in this referential drive the operations of a crucial strategy for survival in marginalized social groups" (Slemon, *Modernism's* 5).

the "nativist" and/or nationalist stances with which they are associated, as well as their link to the old imperial map:

The modern history of literary study has been bound up with the development of cultural nationalism, whose aim was first to distinguish the national canon, then to maintain its eminence, authority and aesthetic autonomy. Even in discussions concerning culture in general that seemed to rise above national differences in deference to a universal sphere, hierarchies and ethnic preferences (as between European and non-European) were held to. This is as true of Matthew Arnold as it is of twentieth-century cultural and philological critics whom I revere--Aurbach, Adorno, Spitzer, Blackmur. For them all, their culture was in a sense the only culture (Culture 316).

However, while Said definitely valorizes something akin to a post-national consciousness which he associates with true "liberation," as opposed to "(S)eparatist or nativist enterprises" which he believes to be "exhausted" (Culture 318), his nuanced analysis of nationalism is not an unequivocal rejection of the nationalist position. Indeed, he identifies national discourse as one of the "three great topics" of resistance culture, inherent in the insistence on the right to see the (colonized) community's history whole..." (Culture 215). As well, Said sees a national literature, along with national language, as a crucial element in this discourse, for

...without the practice of a national culture--from slogans to pamphlets and newspapers, from folktales and heroes to epic poetry, novels and drama--the language is inert; national culture organizes and sustains communal memory" (215).

But for Said, who points to Fanon's remarks "on the dangers posed to a great socio-political movement like decolonization by an untutored national consciousness" (307), the third great theme of resistance culture is "a noticeable pull away from separatist nationalism toward a more integrative view of human community and human liberation" (216). Regarding nationalist discourse as having "an unmistakable patriarchal cast" (224), but

nevertheless as constituting an essential stage in resisting domination and constructing community, Said ultimately calls for an awareness of interrelatedness, for "some notion of literature and indeed all culture as hybrid...and encumbered, or entangled and overlapping" as "the essential idea for the revolutionary realities today"(Culture 317). And he calls for a decolonized literary taxonomy and reading practice that would promote this awareness along with an appreciation of particularity, of difference:

Once we accept the actual configuration of literary experiences overlapping with one another and interdependent, despite national boundaries and coercively legislated national autonomies, history and geography are transfigured in new maps, in new and far less stable entities, in new types of connections... . Newly changed models and types jostle against the older ones. The reader and writer of literature--which itself loses its perdurable forms and accepts the testimonials, revisions, notations of the post-colonial experience, including underground life, slave narratives, women's literature, and prison--no longer need to be tied to an image of the poet or scholar in isolation, secure, stable, national in identity, class, gender or profession, but can think and experience with Genet in Palestine or Algeria, with Tayeb Salih as a Black man in London, with Jamaica Kincaid in the white world, with Rushdie in India and Britain... .

We must expand the horizons against which the questions of *how* and *what* to read and write are both posed and answered. ...our philological home is the world and not the nation or even the individual writer" (317-8).

Said's picture of a new discursive/world order is an appealing one; I am drawn to it as a possible underpinning for a "new humanism," one that might differentiate "between a humanism which harks back critically, or uncritically, to the mainstream of Enlightenment culture and Fanon's new 'new humanism' which attempts to reformulate it as a non-conflictual concept no longer defined against a sub-human other" (Young 125). But, of course, not surprisingly, many are suspicious of the "premature utopianism" of such a vision (Moore-Gilbert 199), suspecting that, with its emphasis on

connection and hybridity, it might both minimize/obliterate genuine difference. For example, like Padolsky, Vautier and others who prefer a national framework of inquiry argue in favour of the richness and particularity it offers over what they see as the reductionism of a postcolonial model. Even critics often identified as postcolonialists, such as Diana Brydon, assert the value of certain nationalisms. Responding to Henry Louis Gates Jr.'s attack on "(T)he sometimes vulgar nationalism implicit in would-be literary categories such as 'American literature'", Brydon asserts that

As a Canadian whose country is on the brink of making a free trade agreement with the United States in which everything, including culture, appears to be on the table, I put a positive value on nationalism. As an American whose nationality is assured, Gates obviously does not. All the more reason, then, for declaring our cultural baggage before crossing cultural borders into foreign territory (Commonwealth 8).

Brydon goes on to note that as a Canadian teaching at a Canadian university, she finds American domination a constant threat to "the local and national cultures" which are "undervalued"; and she is convinced that "we must begin with the local and specific if we are to fully grasp the implications of what we do"(8).¹¹ Thus Canada's "second world" position, to say nothing of its geographic propinquity to the United States, makes it particularly vulnerable to the assimilating pressures of the twentieth century's great imperial power, and justify/require Canada's development of a nationalist discourse.¹²

¹¹ Ironically, Brydon's work, in particular her article "The White Inuit Speaks: Contamination as Literary Strategy" is the object of Enoch Padolsky's critique of postcolonial approaches to Canadian material on the basis of its insensitivity to the local situation.

¹² See Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 6-9 (among other passages in the book) for a particularly lucid discussion of the United States as the current embodiment of the West's rise to imperial power. As he points out, "The American experience...was from the beginning founded upon the idea of 'an imperium' a potentially expansive state of sovereignty (8).

Indeed, as Moore-Gilbert points out, a number of postcolonial critics, both from the 'third world' and from the West, have re-thought earlier disavowals of nationalism:

Without such a strategic commitment to its own kind of 'master-narrative', paradoxically provisional as this may be, of the kind that the essentialist model can offer, emerging postcolonial cultural formations can easily face either co-option by the centre into a larger, official multiculturalism, or an equally damaging dissipation into what Eagleton, like Spivak, calls 'premature utopianism'. Some Western critics, too, have now begun to reassess cultural nationalism, and its modes of critical engagement, in a positive light, both as a corrective to some of the more sloppy versions of cultural pluralism and in terms of the advantages it offers for a coherent politics of resistance (198-9).

Thus, even within postcolonial discourse one can find convincing justification for a kind of "strategic essentialism" or what I would prefer to call "strategic nationalism." For me, this "strategic nationalism" includes a valorization of the Canadian attempt to balance the complex self/other, hybridity/difference, descent/consent tensions in a multiethnic society through a discourse of multiculturalism that aspires to be neither "sloppy" nor coercive, but rather a genuinely horizontal, non-binary, postcolonial vehicle that can accommodate difference, hybridity and unity as envisioned in Said's metaphor of an "atonal ensemble." To this end my project has attempted to bridge the gap delineated by Enoch Padolsky between postcolonial discourse, which connects the experiences of minority ethnic groups in Canada with those of subordinated people elsewhere, and the discourses of nation and difference developed in Canada, to represent very particular Canadian experiences and perspectives. Marrying these two polysemic discourses has the potential of illuminating the ways in which the ethnic minority fiction on which my analysis focuses has been shaped by

Canada's national literary tradition in English, as well as the ways in which this body of fiction has, by the closing years of the twentieth century, transformed that tradition. And it has the potential of illuminating the ways in which the national frame is inadequate for seeing a broader picture, for understanding the degree to which movements of people and ideas (envisioned within a broadly construed postcolonial metaphor of margins and centres) create global relationships, identities and affinities that influence the nation and are themselves influenced by the nation, but also transcend it. It is this sort of awareness of both the particular and the global that is required for the kind postcolonial reading practice that I pointed to in the Introduction, and that I have aspired to in this project.

For me, the challenge involved in appreciating "insider" fictions that represent immigrant and/or ethnic experience in Canada has been ongoing and at least fourfold, and it has been aided by the two (broadly construed) theoretical discourses just discussed. The first part of the challenge was basic: to "discover" these texts, which had, in large measure, been excluded from the dominant literary discourse. This was the primary task I undertook in my master's thesis, which I entitled "Ethnic Character and Social Themes in Novels about Prairie Canada and the Period from 1900 to 1940" (1972). The second part of the challenge, which I was able to address in a very limited way in that early work, was to appreciate the fundamental characteristics of these texts, separately, in relation to each other, in relation to the material experiences of ethnic minorities in Canada, and in relation to the Canadian literary tradition(s) in English. Being equipped to meet this challenge depended on meeting at least two (closely interrelated) others: gaining insight into the relationship between discourse and social and political positioning, in short, between discourse and power; and developing a critical

framework and critical vocabulary capable of delineating and illuminating the nature and positioning of these texts.

The intellectual, social, political and cultural developments of the 1970's and 1980's, including the flowering of minority ethnic writing in Canada and the gradual transformation of the literary mainstream, made the goal that had energized my master's thesis less and less central to my ongoing efforts to appreciate ethnic minority writing. But the other three challenges outlined above remained. The project I report on here grew out of my desire to meet these challenges and in so doing to find some tentative answers to the questions I had about the complex relationships between social stratification, politics and literature in Canada, questions that emerged for me from observing closely the evolution of the intersection between immigration, ethnicity and literature in Canada since the late 1960s. Although my objective of "making sense" of that complex and evolving intersection is elusive in any ultimate sense, I believe I have made some progress toward greater understanding of the nature and significance of "insider" fictions that represent immigrant and/or ethnic experience.

By situating my study on the boundaries of several analytical frameworks and disciplines ("at the complex social/cultural/political site where immigration, ethnicity, nation building and imaginative literature intersect") and by focusing on a number of fictions representing immigrant and/or ethnic experience in Canada by writers speaking from inside that experience, I have been able to show that these literary texts can be seen collectively as a site of discursive struggle between national discourses of exclusion and inclusion; that they bear a complex imprint of the social stratification and political conflicts that have shaped immigrant and ethnic experience in Canada; and that the subordination and/or marginality often

associated with immigrant and ethnic experience have been encoded in these texts in their narrative and thematic features. In sum, I have shown that these texts can be seen to constitute a body of work characterized by recurring structural patterns and themes that constitute textual resistance. As well, I have shown that post-colonial theory is a useful and largely compatible addition to earlier critical approaches to this literature and to the interdisciplinary discourse of ethnic studies more generally. Applied within this context of Canadian scholarship, postcolonialism offers a valuable perspective for contextualizing and appreciating a body of texts that can be understood as a discourse of resistance within a very particular Canadian context, but one that resonates with the experiences associated with colonialism and neo-colonialism elsewhere.

Drawing first and foremost on the texts themselves and on an evolving and eclectic analytical framework, my analysis has revealed, to some considerable degree (as Ashcroft et al. argued such an analysis would do) "both the configurations of domination and the imaginative and creative responses to the condition"(33). The primary subtext of the discursive configuration in which these insider texts participate (almost by default) is inclusion and exclusion. One can argue that the inclusion/exclusion dichotomy is inevitably central to any "configuration of domination"; it is very clearly central to fiction about ethnic minority experience. This dichotomy shapes fiction after fiction, from Ralph Connor's important hegemonic text, *The Foreigner* --its very title a statement of exclusion, its narrative constructed from justifications for exclusion and formulas for inclusion-- to "insider" texts such as Salverson's *The Viking Heart*, Lysenko's *Yellow Boots*, Marlyn's *Under the Ribs of Death*, Richler's *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*, Haas's *The Street Where I Live*, Yee's

"Prairie Night 1939," Wiseman's *Crackpot*, to name but a few. Over and over again, the fundamental "issue" in these fictions is the complex dynamic of exclusion and inclusion: the fact or degree of one or the other; the effect of one or the other; the price of one or the other.

The "configuration of domination" revealed in these texts, while not a simple reflection of Canada's social and political hierarchy,¹³ is nevertheless a representation of it. And more than that, in the view of a number of theorists, socio-semioticians and post-colonialists among them, such cultural products as these texts can be understood as sites that encode social and political hierarchies and conflicts, struggles for inclusion and exclusion, for dominance (Barthes; Hall; Bakhtin; Bourdieu; Said, *Culture*; Itwaru and Ksonzek). My present study confirms this view, illuminating the narrative and thematic features that encode "the configuration of dominance" and the "creative attempts" to resist and transform it.

Each chapter points to a complex narrative feature that encodes both dominance and resistance in the corpus of insider texts I analyze. Together, these chapters provide a kind of topographical map of certain key aspects of Canada's discourses of nationhood and of the dynamics of their evolution. My analysis sheds light on some of the ways that this fiction has served as a vehicle for representing, as well as resisting, the social, political, and cultural marginalization experienced by non-British immigrants to English-speaking Canada.

¹³ See Sarah M. Corse (14) for a lucid discussion of the problems with a simple "reflection" theory of literature. She argues for "(M)ore" sophisticated formulations" that "assume an integrated social model within which social structures and behavior both shape cultural products and are shaped by them," as propounded by Anthony Giddens in *The Constitution of Society: Outline of a Theory of Structuration*. Los Angeles: UC Press, 1984. Corse also develops her central thesis convincingly, i.e. that "(T)he process of canon formation, and of the establishment of artistic reputations generally, cannot fail to be a political matter"(16).

Chapter One highlights the manichean nature of the discursive structures in which these texts participate and which they ultimately attempt to re-configure. Again and again, the ethnic characters in these fictions are represented as inhabiting a dualistic world, whose restrictive nature is represented through binary structural patterns (as, for example, in Caterina Edwards' *The Lion's Mouth*, a novel that is literally divided into two halves); through binary images of contrast between old and new, parent and child, victim and villain and through binary images of dislocation (as in Paci's three novels, in which the characters are crippled by various kinds of gaps between heart and mind, body and spirit, past and present).

Thus, the "creative response" one sees in these texts is a foregrounding of immigrant and ethnic experience as problematically manichean, and then a deconstructing of this binary world. A variety of narrative and thematic devices are used in this project. In some texts, the primary vehicle of resistance is the journey narrative, and in particular the return journey narrative, which insists on re-connecting old and new and on blurring the differences between them. This kind of "rewriting of myths" occurs in a number of texts (as, for example, in Paci's *Black Madonna*, Minni's "Roots," Kreisel's *The Rich Man*, Yee's "Prairie Night 1939," Chong's *The Concubine's Children*). In other texts, the primary vehicle of resistance is irony (as in Marlyn's *Under the Ribs of Death*, Richler's *Son of a Smaller Hero* and *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*; or parody, as in *The Street Where I Live*, or a juxtaposition of disparate narrative modes (magic realism), as in *Crackpot*, or a multi-vocal narration (as in *Winter of the White Wolf*). In still others, dualism is exploded through a re-constructed symbol, for example a religious rite, as in *The Father*, or through a complex "writing back" to a variety of dominant texts, as in Lysenko's *Yellow Boots*, or through a combination of these methods.

Chapter Two delineates an important connection between these fundamental binary patterns, their deconstruction, and the generational mapping that is common in the fictions discussed. The second and third generations occupy pivotal positions, first, as writers: mediators and apologists in their own right, such as Denise Chong in *The Concubine's Children*, Joy Kogawa in *Obasan*, Rudy Wiebe in *Peace Shall Destroy Many* and *The Blue Mountains of China*; but also as fictional characters who are represented as both victims and liberators in these resistance narratives. For example, Paci's second-generation characters are both victims and agents of change, as with Stefano in *The Father* and Maria in *Black Madonna*. So too with Guy Vanderhaeghe's narrator in "What I Learned from Caesar," with Sandor Hunyadi in *Under the Ribs of Death*; with Lilli in *Yellow Boots*, with the narrator and her friends in *The Street Where I Live*, with Annika in *Winter of the White Wolf*.

In Chapter three, by focusing on the image and narrative role of the ethnic ghetto in insider fictions, I connect the generational, or time schema with a spatial one that is not only related to the generational frame, but is equally important as a discursive vehicle for highlighting the "configurations of domination" and for re-configuring them. I argue that a depiction of the ethnic ghetto in an "insider" text is a key index (and metonym) of its preoccupation with highlighting the experience of subordination, as well as a major part of a strategy of resistance. Revealing the particular subordinate position occupied by ethnic minorities, as well, at times, as some interesting differences between the fictional landscapes created by male and female writers, these representations of the ghetto (as, for example, in Marlyn's *Under the Ribs of Death*, in Wiseman's *The Sacrifice* and *Crackpot*, in Richler's *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*, in Maara Haas' *The Street Where I Live*, and

in M.G. Vassanji's *No New Land*), also make a claim on Canadian spaces-- geographical, economic social, and cultural-- and point to ways of "making space" for the other, and in so doing, changing and improving Canadian society.

Chapter Four explores more fully the ways in which the fictions I analyze constitute a site of resistance, arguing that, typically, in revealing "configurations of domination" these texts engage in considerable social criticism. Not surprisingly, since, as Mandel points out, they occupy an intermediary position "at an interface of two cultures" and are concerned with "the dialectic of self and other and the duplicities of self-creation, transformation and identities" (65), their interrogation is double-edged, at times aimed at the marginal group, at other times at a more generalized Canadian society. The structural and thematic devices employed in these critiques are multiple, including such often interrelated strategies as various kinds of irony, parody, and humour that serve to highlight and critique the social and cultural dynamics of inclusion and/or exclusion, and usually, in so doing, to suggest ways of re configuring existing patterns of inter cultural relations that accommodate greater diversity. These textual features can at once be read as indices of marginality and of struggle, and as strategies of resistance that undermine univocality and hierarchy.

Thus my project highlights minority ethnic fiction as a type of post-colonial discourse, concerned with the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion, of identity and transformation, but within a context that is particular to Canada over the past century. To this end I have employed an eclectic theoretical framework. In addition to a variety of primary texts, I have drawn on a wide, cross-disciplinary scholarship, and on approaches (historical, sociological, and literary) that are most often brought together in

the interdisciplinary discourses of Canadian studies, Canadian ethnic studies. and, more recently, cultural studies. My project draws on the work of historians, sociologists, interdisciplinary scholars of ethnic studies, and a variety of literary theorists, from Eli Mandel with his concept of "ethnic voice," to Robert Kroetsch with his delineation of characteristic binary patterns, to Werner Sollors with his interpretation of ethnic apology and the tensions between the discourses of consent and descent, to Enoch Padolsky, with his commitment to an interdisciplinary, (Canadian) ethnic studies framework for reading ethnic minority writing, to post-colonial theorists such as Edward Said, Stephen Slemon and others, with their views on the role of cultural production in establishing and sustaining imperial hierarchies. Juxtaposed, these analytical maps clarify the nature of Canada's "neither/nor" postcolonial space and of the "ethnic voice" that has helped to define it.

I have developed this approach--what amounts to a reading practice--in the spirit I believe Said evokes in his plea for "... a different and innovative paradigm for humanistic research...", one that fosters an "...interpretative method whose material is the disparate but intertwined and interdependent, and above all overlapping streams of historical experience" (Culture 312). My attempt to develop such an approach has enabled me to clarify to some degree the nature and significance of the discursive connections between the historical positioning and experiences of "the other ethnic groups" in Canada, the continuing evolution of national cultural and social policy, the opening up over the past twenty years or so of the Canadian literary canon, and the project of textual resistance that has been underway in Canada since the early years of this century in literature produced by ethnic minority writers.

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